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THE LECTURES  
OF A  
CERTAIN PROFESSOR.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1911

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THE LECTURES  
OF A  
CERTAIN PROFESSOR

BY THE  
REV. JOSEPH FARRELL

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I.—ABOUT DAY-DREAMS.

I HOPE there are few of my readers who have not, from time to time, indulged in a day-dream. It is a cheap luxury, and it will give some faint touch of romance to the most commonplace life. And indeed I believe that, even in these prosaic times—and perhaps all the more because they are prosaic—most people might find a certain advantage in getting out of the noise of the crowd, now and then, and dreaming a little. It is a blessing, too, that place and posture are, for the most part, indifferent. If one wish to have a *bondâ fide* night-dream, he must get to his bed—under the penalty of having the bodily discomfort of any less regular sleeping-place made incarnate in his visions. He must utterly abjure late suppers if he would avoid the too probable contingency of having some grim goblin enthroned upon his chest, and presiding relentlessly over his destiny through the silent watches of the interminable night; or of having to lie for what seems an

eternity of utter helplessness, buried, like a baffled Titan, under an avalanche of blankets.

But a day-dream is a matter less difficult to manage. Are you walking through the silent fields, plucking here and there an early primrose, to remind yourself that it is spring-time? Are you pacing the hot sands at some crowded watering-place with an iron determination (very detrimental to its own object) to extract the fullest flavour out of your summer holiday? Are you hurrying through the streets of some great city, wondering (if you be of the thoughtful) whitherwards *these* waves are ever rolling, and on what soundless shore they will break at last? Are you on top of an omnibus or an Alp, in the coupé of a first-class carriage, or down a coal-pit, or "up in a balloon"? No matter—if but in the mood, put on the magic cap—be off to dreamland—set to build your castle in the air—and let, for the time, no impertinent suspicion haunt you, that by-and-by, just when your eager hand is placing the topmost turret, it will all topple down, like a house of cards in a child's play.

Still there are times, and places, and circumstances peculiarly favourable to day-dreams. And what in individual cases these conditions are depends very much on temperament and habit of life. One man will dream day-dreams better in the bright summer, when there is in the warm air a very hush of utter but delicious languor; while another will have his dreams attuned to the strident whistle of the wintry blast.

I confess my favourite time for dreaming looks to be a most unromantic one. It is the hour after dinner; and let me tell you that, unromantic as it may appear, it has a great deal to recommend it. Let me suppose

an honest day's work done quite to my satisfaction. I have dined alone, *Lucullus cum Lucullo*, or *Lazarus cum Lazaro*, it boots not which; and drawing my chair close to the fire, if it be winter—in the full summer, to the open window—I begin my dreaming. What quaint and curious visions have come to me at these hours, how many a pleasant story has been whispered in my ear by those rare story-tellers, memory and hope! How many a glorious shape has revealed itself among the clouds of the sunset; how many an old familiar face has glowed among the coals; how many a long silent voice has made itself heard in the deep hush! Verily there is betimes a touch of sadness in these dreams.

I take advantage of a fresh paragraph to introduce myself to the reader. I am a PROFESSOR OF THE INEXACT SCIENCES—whatever *they* may be; for I confess I have not yet exhausted their scope. Their subject-matter has the disadvantage (*and* the advantage) of shifting occasionally, and being gloriously indefinite. My materials are collected in all sorts of out-of-the-way places—from the tags and fringes that hang from the most tangible subjects; from the odds and ends of knowledge; from the clippings and parings that accumulate in mental studios from which solid work has gone out; from the rainbow-coloured theories spun from the mists that hang about the limits of *the known*, in that dim debateable land where reason glides into feeling, and certainties begin to melt into impressions: from these are derived my materials, and from a thousand other “unconsidered trifles.” I purpose taking the reader (*not* the multitudinous readers of this work, but *you*, dear reader, one in a thousand) fully into my confidence, but with certain stipulations. I claim the liberty

of digressing, even audaciously, whenever I please. I have not the slightest intention (the fates forefend) of delivering *set* lectures on any subject whatsoever; and whoso walks with me must accommodate himself to my pace, and become, for the time being, an intellectual vagabond. We will sometimes, to be sure, keep the beaten track of the great highways of human thought, but if in our progress we come upon the opening of some green lane where the shade looks grateful, and the wild flowers peep out from the hedgerows, do you suppose I shall not take you by the arm, and, with gentle violence, compel you to explore it along with me? What if we see the flash of a river winding through distant fields, or hear the bubbling laughter of some hidden brook, do you think we shall pass by unheeding? *Absit omen*; for then the Professor and his lectures would be near their end.

I do not envy the man who never had a day-dream, to whom "a yellow primrose is a flower and nothing more," who has never seen a vision in the clouds that hang about the sunset, nor ever watched the weird faces in the evening fire. Not that I would wish a man to sink into a mere dreamer. The dreams would soon grow dull. In this busy world that would be an impossible vocation for any one who had not a comfortable income from some such unfailing source as the *three per cents.*, nor would it be a desirable one even for him who had. Happily it is the lot of no mortal man. By sweat of brain or brow must every child of Adam buy his daily bread, if he would have it taste pleasantly to the palate; and in that sentence he who runs may read a blessing, even though in the uttering it sounded like a curse.

Not so sad a thing, O Juvenis! as thy hot young heart would deem it, is the unwelcome thought, breaking the gossamer thread of thy brightest day-dream, that the holidays are slipping away like some handful of fine golden sand. Not such a misfortune, that just, mayhap, when you are flourishing an imaginary blood-stained sword, after a furious charge with Wallace or Owen Roe O'Neill, or Thaddeus of Warsaw—hey, presto! it is changed into the ferula, and the voice of Dr. Greekroots, which even imagination fails to soften, calls thy wandering spirit back from dreamland.

Even to thee, O Senex! if haply thou hast kept thy heart so green that even yet fairy dreams dance in it at quiet times—even to thy dreams come an interruption and an ending. Is it thy scapegrace son (so strangely like his sire in bygone years)? Is it thy last book, which some irresponsible reviewer has cut up savagely? Is it the shadow of a "coming event" in the shape of what seems to thee exorbitant income-tax? Is it that thy wine is corked, or some rose-leaf has got crumpled in thy couch? Be it what it may, it will be there in due time, telling thee to be up and doing. No fear, indeed, that any man will be let overdream himself, if he be good for anything besides dreaming.

It will be manifest by this time that I am a dreamer, and an advocate for dreams. After such a confession, I suppose it will scarcely be expected that I should enter the lists and support my thesis in logical fashion against any hard-headed, square-minded individual, who, having barely that minimum of imagination that just suffices to keep his other faculties from rusting, cannot conceive the use, or perhaps even the possibility, of putting it to any special work peculiarly its own. In truth, I am



convinced that there are some things quite beyond the reach of argument—some things so subtle that no logic can take hold on them, and keep them long enough to investigate them thoroughly; that there are points of knowledge accessible to the human soul, which yet refuse to adapt themselves to the Procrustean bed of a syllogism in *Barbara*. I have found it to my advantage, from time to time, to be content to hearken to the pleading of feeling, even when I could not put that pleading into words.

There is a valued friend of mine who has a profound contempt for the argumentative discipline. But let me introduce my friend. He is one of those half-wise, half-foolish people whom we call "characters." He is studiously eccentric; but the wisdom that he seems almost ashamed of is constantly coming to the surface of his talk, sweeping out of sight for a moment the odd waifs and strays that float there abundantly. He professes to be a cynic, having, as I happen to know, the kindest heart in the world. It is his cherished ambition to be feared for his sharp, cutting sayings and wild whimsical opinions; but somehow he makes grown people smile, and children pluck him by the coat-tails. I have seen him interrupt a dissertation on the wisdom of the Spartan method of disposing of unpromising children, to lift a squalling urchin from the gutter and console him with a penny. With the few who, like myself, know him intimately, he is immensely popular—half to the delight of his warm heart, but half, too, to the disappointment of his cynical ambition. Having introduced him, I hasten to say that I shall make copious use of his whimsical wisdom in my lectures. Hear him now, apropos of the worth of argument. Thus said to me lately this genial cynic—

“ If you are engaged in an argument (a very profitless engagement, by the way), and if you are anxious (as most people are) for victory, rather than for truth, you should proceed thus. Let me suppose you have in your favour some isolated fact (these are easily found on any side of any question)—make that your *minor* premise—then take a general proposition, and wrap up your conclusion in it, and make it your major. There you have your argument. You say you can’t prove your general proposition—of course you can’t. But you can do what will serve your purpose equally well; you can preface it, thus:—‘ Every one who is not a born idiot knows’—or, ‘ it is admitted by all who have studied the question minutely ’—or, ‘ the profoundest philosophers agree ’—or some such humbug—and in nine cases out of ten no one will dispute it. Some will feel a personal interest in proving they are not idiots, and others will be anxious to pretend they are quite *au courant* with the philosophers: none of them will have sufficient time to analyse a big generality; and if any sensible person amongst them make an attempt to do so, why he will appear stupid and slow, and the argument will be miles away on quite other ground before he overtakes it. And if he does come up with it, why you can put him down loftily by remarking, ‘ that was settled half an hour ago to the satisfaction of everybody; ’ and ‘ everybody ’ (the fools) will say you are right; and your opponent (*and* common sense) will be nowhere. Now, having given you a sword, I will provide you also with a shield. Should any clever person try this method on yourself, believe me it is pure loss of time to demand proof of his proposition; that would lead only to other arguments, which, if pursued rigorously, might result in truth (for

which you are not seeking), and might *not* result in victory (for which you are). The best—in fact the infallible way—is to ask him politely to define his terms, and it will be found, that the more they suit his purpose, the less able he will be to define them. In fact, few men can make any hand of a definition, and no wonder; for a definition is the ripest fruit of perfect knowledge. Good logical argument,” he continued, “is the rarest thing in the world, and few there are on whom it would not be quite thrown away. As in coursing hares, the hound that turns the hare oftenest is judged superior to the hound that merely kills it; so he is accounted, usually, the more skilful in argument, *not* he who runs it down to its conclusion, which is truth, but he who can turn it most adroitly. In the one case, the mere killing of the hare (which to an outsider would seem to be the main object of hunting it) is of little importance, as compared to the speed of the hound. In the other, truth is not half so much valued as intellectual smartness.” Thus far the cynic.

But to return to my day-dreams. I must try to make out a case for them. Every one sees wisdom in the maxim, “know thyself.” What a decided advantage it would be to society if every man did but know himself. You would then have the right man in the right place oftener than he is, nor would you be pained as often as you are, by the spectacle of the “square men” panting and pushing for the “round holes.” Tom would long ago have taken his eye off the woolsack, on which, *entre nous*, he will never sit, and turned it in some more profitable direction. Bill would, perhaps, have cultivated the land about which he now only harangues. Harry would never have wasted the midnight oil on



that volume of verses—"Aspirings after the Infinite"—the only result of which has been to convince him that the poetical taste of this age has been hopelessly vitiated by Tennyson and others.

It is said, "*noscitur a sociis*"—and I believe it might be said of any one with at least equal truth—you may know him by his day-dreams. In the application of the former proverb, it is by no means necessary that the subject of your speculations *have* companions at all. If he have *none*, we may decide infallibly, unless the circumstances be very peculiar, what manner of man *he* is. So in the latter case too. If your man has never had a day-dream, I could read you his character in a twinkling. I, for one, would have as little to do with him as I could help. I should have an unpleasant presentiment of *corners* on his mind, against which I would ear to knock either my head or my heart. If I could, I would appoint him bosom friend to my direst enemy—I would set him to criticise a rival professor.

But to return to the point, namely, that a man's day-dreams may give him useful help in the important art of knowing himself. As a man is, so shall his day-dreams be. There have been philosophers who maintained that, as a general rule, every physical deformity will have its counterpart in the mind; that a man with a hump on his back will, unless he take special care, have a hump in his mind too; that a stammer in the tongue will be discernible also in the thought; and that where there is "no speculation in the eye," there will be very little in the understanding either. It may be all as true as it is fanciful; but, with much more confidence would I assert, that a man's inner self—that self that is so close to each of us, that for the most part we

fail to see it at all—is strikingly reproduced in his day-dreams. For every warp in the mind of the builder, there shall be a fault in the architecture of the air castle that he builds. If there be in his mind hidden away, however carefully, a closet with a skeleton, believe me he will find it in his castle as well. There, too, will be provided ample stabling for all his hobbies. Nay, his very inconsistencies, so palpable to his friends, so unsuspected by himself—the discrepancies between his habitual beliefs and his habitual actions—all will have their counterparts; so that a man's castle in the clouds will often be as incongruous as those old family mansions in which one can trace, in brick and mortar, the varying tastes of different generations of masters.

So, let a man watch his day-dreams: for truly they are worth the pains. Let him, like a careful landlord, make an occasional tour of inspection amongst his *chateaux en Espagne*, and he will find it turn to his profit. Let him, above all, look to the company he meets in dreamland, and if his dream companions be disreputable, let him discard them; for, else, they will some time shake his unwilling hand, and hold him by the button in his real life. Let him bethink himself, too, what part of the castle is his favourite resort. Is it the library or the kitchen? Does he lounge about the stables, or dally in the banquet-hall or the ball-room? Is there a secret hoard, with lock of Bramah or of Chubb, or a garden with a scarcely gliding river, over which the lotus-tree is growing? Ah me! what use a man might make of his day-dreams! What various knowledge—what sage advice—what grave reproach—what solemn warning—what tears—what laughter—what pathos is running through them all!

All great men have been dreamers of day-dreams. It is but another way of saying that each had some cherished *ideal* which he strove to make a reality, by hand or brain, by doing or by writing. But, on the other hand, all dreamers are not (nor are they at all likely to be) great men. The conclusion would be as false in fact as the inference would be unwarrantable in logic. When I assert that our day-dreams might aid us in acquiring self-knowledge, do you suppose I meant to imply that the object of our dreaming ambition ought to be made the object of our waking pursuits? I never meant any such thing. Is Smith to transmute his precious time into the blankest of blank verse, because he has heard himself hailed in dreamland as the poet of the age? Is Jones to turn from book-keeping to book-making (and trunk-lining) because he feels, in his visions, the heart hot within him with the fire of genius? Is Robinson to grasp the sword instead of the yard measure, because he has led imaginary squadrons through the "imminent deadly breach?" Common sense answers, "decidedly not." Nay, Smith himself, in his intervals of lucidity, would chuckle at the utter absurdity of Jones, who, in his cooler moments, would return the chuckle with interest; and Robinson, while burnishing his sabre, would call both of them fools. It is the way of the world, my dear friends. Our eyes are made to look without, not within. Everyone sees his neighbour, and as the neighbour returns the compliment, there need be no one without a monitor; and we get on better than might have been expected in the absence of introspective eyes.

So I would say, our day-dreams give us warning rather than guidance; or, better, guide us precisely by

warning. They may give hints of aptitudes, but are, as often as not, silent about other no less requisite conditions of success. But of this be sure: if there be in your day-dreams anything mean, or sordid, or selfish, it came not there without a reason. It is the projected shadow of something very real, and should be removed as you would remove a shadow from the sunny wall—and there is but one effectual way of doing that.

Our day-dreams are ever changing as we go on through life, though in most cases the change is so gradual that it is only at certain well-marked intervals that it comes home to us with any force. There is one change so well defined, that few will fail to mark it when it comes. It is--that in the spring and summer, and, perhaps, the earlier portion of the autumn of a few lives, it is hope that moulds our vision; but some day the Rubicon is passed—hope gives place to memory, and our dreams are ever after in the past.

What time the tingling blood grows cool, and the pulse begins to go with ever slower beat; what time we trace the furrow on the brow, and the treacherous silver stealing into the lovelocks of our youth; what time the stream of life has ceased its brawling, and sets in with fuller but more silent current as it nears the "falls;" then our dreams begin to change. It is as if we fain would turn the vessel round, and row against the stream, and get some miles further up from the rapids—whence we must one day, perforce, tumble over. It is as if we fain would pause upon the road to rest, and inhale the perfume (now, alas! so faint) of the flowers we plucked a far way back; heeding not, or striving not to heed, the tokens of the night. Fondly do we look back on the way that we have come, thinking of the freshness

of the morning, when the dew was on the wayside flowers; thinking of the fair landscapes that the sun shone upon at mid-day; thinking of the people we picked up in the journey, and the merry chat we held with other wayfarers; "thinking, thinking, of the old familiar faces." And all the while the heralds of the great night are coming up from the dim east, to remind us that the journey will soon be done, and that we shall be soon at home—in our long home.

Pen, not sword, in hand have I, the lecturer, been wont to make incursions into dreamland. The way it came about was this:—When I was little more than a child, it happened to me to fall in with an old volume of "*Lives of the British Poets.*" It was meagre in detail, and poor in execution; but, to my young eyes, it was a golden book. True, I saw there enough to convince me that the poet's crown, however glorious, was usually heavy to the wearer. True, I read the oftentold tale of blind old Milton, "fallen upon evil days, with darkness, and with dangers compassed round"—of Chatterton lying dead in his poor lodging—of Otway starved, of Burns wasting in wild orgies the powers that might have been transmuted into other immortal songs; but I could see no sadness in their stories, and I would have felt it like a sacrilege to pity the great masters. So, of course, I too should be a poet. Thus it came to pass that all my day-dreams were of authorship—and my castle in the air, the temple of fame.

Naturally enough, at first, nothing short of an epic would satisfy my ambition. Nothing daunted by the knowledge that through all the ages there have come but four great Epic Fathers—I began to think the time fast ripening for a fifth. Then, after a deep plunge



into Shakspeare, it struck me that the drama was, after all, the most comprehensive, if not the highest form of human composition. I would be a dramatist. True, on considering these matters in detail, I found, oddly enough, as it seemed to me then, that my predecessors had forestalled me in the most available subjects. It was hard to find a hero for an epic after Homer, and Virgil, and Dante, and Milton, had had their pick and choice. It was hard to construct a new plot after Shakspeare, still I felt it was *but* waiting for a hero and a plot—they would doubtless come in time, the rest would then be easy.

The result of that happy time—for happy it assuredly was, in the very greatness of the delusion—is lying by me at this hour, in the shape of a whole deskfull of unfinished manuscripts. At times, even yet, I take them out, and find a sort of pleasure—only a *sort*, for it has its touch of pain—in tracing through the fragments the faded lines of half-forgotten hopes. Alas! the hero never came, and the plots are amoryst the “things that merely might have been.” It is a favourite thought of mine that, as there are better fish in the sea than ever came out of it, so, perhaps, the best books are those that have never been written. A certain place, they say, is paved with good intentions; and if there be, as why should there not? a limbus of authorship, believe me, it is paved with the great works that have been written and published only in dreamland. These dream-times, pleasant though they be, are often, must I say it? times of special laziness. Mayhap, once in an age they lead to something great; just as we read (in legends, I confess, more or less apocryphal) of some lucky dreamer, out of a whole host of less fortunate, and

consequently unrecorded sleepers, finding the pot of gold that had been the subject of a thrice-repeated vision.

But even when a work has been written, after days or years of labour—even in it, the pavement of limbus has its part. For, does it ever come quite up to its author's ideal? Scarcely any man who has conceived an idea, and striven to bring it forth, and wrap it decently in the swaddling-clothes of prose or verse, has ever been *altogether* satisfied with the figure it cuts before the world. Substantially, to be sure, it is his idea—but in the details what a woful falling off! *In his mind*, how beautiful it was, how closely reasoned, how eloquently worded, how facetious, how impressive, how strong, how musical! But on the printed page—oh, dear! what gaps in the reasoning for a hostile critic to ride through—what broken links in the chain that was to bind like fate—where is the force and the eloquence—where the pathos, and the ringing music? Thus, apropos of my unfinished manuscripts, and the dreams that have faded away.

Well, however hard the lesson, I have learned to come down full many a peg. But, while confessing my inability to back Pegasus, I do not see why I should not keep a hobby for occasional riding. If I were allowed, now, to choose a place in the temple of fame, I believe I should select the quiet, but comfortable, corner in which the Essayists congregate. They, too, were professors of the inexact sciences. I should dearly like to be in the way of hearing the wise, whimsical gossip of the garrulous Montaigne—the rollicking wit of Dick Steele—the urbané humour of the modest Addison. Now and then, from some more sacred parts of the

temple, Bacon would stroll in with his sententious wisdom. I should like to take the arm of Elia, and listen to his genial talk about our neighbours. Above all, I should like to leave a book behind me like his—a book in which the writer would not appear so much the author as the friend, and the companion of the sweet hours of rare holidays.

I would not willingly obtrude my gossip on people who were busy. I would rather wait for the well-earned holiday—and I would, then, ask my reader, to come out, as it were, for a walk. We should not much care whither we were going, only taking care that our road led through pleasant places. We would not feel bound to any dusty highway—we would burst through the hedges of the wayside, and ramble on through green fields—or under the shadow of old forest trees. We would hail the travellers on the road, and talk to the labourers at their work—and sit beside some babbling stream, and fling wild flowers on the waters, and listen to the sage advice the stream would be sure to give whilst hurrying them away. In due time we should get home—perhaps somewhat weary, but with that pleasant weariness that befits the close of such a ramble. For my part, I would not take it amiss if my friend yawned in my face, on bidding me good-night—provided that, in shaking my hand, he would say: “We must certainly have another ramble some day.”

*Hoc est in votis.* Such a walk, dear reader, have I been taking with you in dreamland. Shall we walk together any more?



## II.—ABOUT CERTAIN NEW BEGINNERS.

TAKING my seat in my professorial chair, and seeing, as I do really see, my shadowy audience grouping themselves silently around me, and feeling very keenly how many there are of that silent "class" who could speak with much more weight and usefulness, from a professor's chair: my first feeling, and I think a very natural one, is, how difficult it is to begin—that is, to begin well. If one could only strike the proper key-note, how readily might the melody flow out like water or like wine.

In the shadowy audience that I feel to be around me, there is, probably, one heart, perhaps more than one, to whom, for certain reasons enclosed in the occult mysteries of sympathy, some word that I could say might be as Moses' rod upon the hard rock, forcing out the springs that quench a heart's thirst, and fertilise a barren life. If I could only draw that one face out clearly from the shadowy mists, and take one long look into the depths of the revealing eyes, it is possible that I might find the magic word on the tip of my pen. But it may not be. These written words must take their chance—must go forth, like wafted seeds—to fall, some upon the travelled highway where the feet of busy wayfarers will trample them into the dust; but, it may be too—and it is the dear hope of every one who writes—other some to fall gently upon the generous soil of some warm heart, that may one day find upon the spot

a flower, and scarcely ever dream from whence it found its way there.

I warned you, my dear readers (I fain would say "friends," but perhaps it is too soon for that) that I am a most audacious digressor. Do what you will, pray as you may, I will keep no dusty road while the distant hills are all so green, and paths wind up to them, so daintily marked upon the grass, that fairies might have made them in their fantastic dances under mellow harvest moons.

But about beginning. There is a great deal in how to do it—" *Dimidium facti*," &c., saith the old Latin grammar. It has been said in the proverbs of a hundred tongues, how much colouring the work takes from the beginning of it. It is a curious thought, and one that must occur to anyone who writes, that it is almost absolutely certain, that at no other moment of all his life would he have written the page before him precisely as he has just written it; and as to how he has written, much depends on how he began. We writers think we are using words with absolute mastery: but the words have in them a certain subtle power that gives some of the mastery to them. Do you suppose that I have the faintest notion of the precise words that shall fall from the tip of my pen, say, two lines down? Not a bit of it. No writer has. What he is going to say he knows in a general sort of way; but as to how he is going to say it, he himself must wait and see. It would seem as if some power, quite independent of ourselves, were interfering in the matter. And, indeed, in our own individual cases, we writers are not slow to admit such an interfering power. We call it "inspiration" and "genius" and other fine names.

The old difficulty about walking was solved, *ambulando*. The difficulty of beginning has been overcome by having begun. I have made myself somewhat more easy in my chair, can look around me less nervously, fortified by the consciousness that at any rate I have said something. But I had certain notions to propound, and I have not lost sight of them, and you will allow me to shape them into words after my own erratic fashion. Professor I assume to be—with less of pretension than the title may seem to imply—and I imagine myself now and then to be old enough to lecture; not, I would have you to know, by reason of any large lapse of years, but rather because I flatter myself that I have stored up the produce of several vintages of experience, of rare and precious brand. For, you see, there were comet years in my life since I began to live. Well, however all that may be, I use my eyes, and I see a great deal of what is going on around me; and I believe that to be a much rarer gift than perhaps you imagine. It so happens, and I thank my stars for it, that I am placed rather on the outskirts of the fight than in the press of battle. Consequently I see more of the battle of life than some of the active combatants. And occasionally, too, thank God, it is the fortune of my position, that I can draw some sorely maimed sufferer out of the throng, and bind up his crushed limbs, and pour oil into his gaping wounds.

Well, amongst the people who attract a share of my attention are certain new beginners whom I will present to you, and in whom, if you only observe their manners and customs, you will, doubtless, take an intelligent interest.

It happens—it happens constantly—it is always hap-

pening, more or less. You must surely have observed it. They marry, this little more than boy, and this little more than girl, and they begin their housekeeping on the slenderest possible stock of experience. They begin it in not a little of the spirit with which, not so long ago, they used to conduct those childish pastimes that often give to people with a touch of humour in them, such a comic commentary on the future grave pursuits which they foreshadow. I can well imagine the young husband and the young wife shyly making each other's acquaintance, and admitting each other into those barred and locked chambers of character that are rarely or never opened before marriage. They learn by degrees little things about each other, which, little though they be, are to them of unspeakable importance. Above all, they learn, and it is well if they learn wisely—though the knowledge has a smack of the bitter in it—the inevitable abatement they must make in their before-marriage ideals of each other. It has, I repeat, its touch of sadness, this knowledge; but it has to be acquired. Then they get what I may call the “lie” of each other's mind, and may congratulate themselves if they have common thoughts on great subjects; but may, perhaps, much more congratulate themselves if they have many common tastes and common feelings about things which fools, and only fools (but fools are numerous) call little. It is a comment I have made on life in general, that people differ with more bitterness about matters of feeling and of taste, than about matters of pure thought. And then I laugh quietly to myself when I picture the effort *he* makes to sustain the character of a man, which, in virtue of his marriage (and he feels only too keenly, in virtue of little else), all his acquaintance thrust upon

him. And again the effort, many times to be renewed, that *she* makes to remember that she is no longer a mere girl; and my quiet laugh is only deepened, when, as sometimes happens, the thing is overdone, and the young wife assumes a matronhood that would be the natural growth only of long, long years. How full of tender humour, of deep pathos, of laughter, and of some not very bitter tears, it all is, if one could only see it, as a sympathetic angel might be supposed to see it.

Then comes, in God's good time, to the young couple, a tiny form—the embodiment, as it were, of their affection—a tiny voice that breaks the silence of their love, and yet, more eloquently even than that silence, expresses it. You can see a new dignity seated on the young husband's brow, and a deeper tenderness gleaming in the eyes of the young wife. For evermore the tone of the house has changed—for all the music of the home has set itself to the shrill treble of "baby's" cry. God has given to this man and this woman one of the noblest possible tasks. He has created for them a new being, rich with all the yet unexhausted possibilities of human nature. What a trust it is!—not alone a new body to be fed and nurtured, but a new soul that is no sooner born than *it*, too, is hungering for its proper food. It will starve and dwindle if it be not fed, and even when it is fed it will take shape and grow in a way that very much depends on the sort of food it gets. It, too, must have its light, and air, and sunshine. Very fair, no doubt, were the flowers of Paradise given into the keeping of the first human pair, but how, in fairness or in beauty, could they compare to this tiny baby flower!—the latest planted in God's garden of the world, and given to be nurtured to perfection by a father and



mother. Verily, in this garden God's angels shall walk betimes, and God Himself come often to see how his gardeners are doing their work. Here is another new beginner, in whom almost every one that sees him feels compelled to take an interest. And this beginner begins as if he had a right to begin, and knew it. He has no sort of hesitation in expressing his feelings, no reticence whatever about his wants. By-and-by he waxes strong and large, and crows and splutters, and kicks lustily, and stretches out his bits of hands as if they were meant to grasp the universe. The little eyes dilate with wonder at every new sight, and every sight is new. But if everything he sees is new to him, everything he does is new to his young mother. He smiles, and his smile is a revelation—for never surely baby smiled with so sweet a smile, since little Abel (ah! not Cain, though he was — eldest born, and, doubtless, smiled as babies have been smiling ever since) smiled up into the face of Mother Eve. His laugh has music in it such as his mother, at any rate, never heard before. His very wrath is sublime. As a poet might gaze on a storm-tossed sea, so a mother beholds her child's momentary fit of passion—as yet he is no more responsible than the sea itself. He cries for the moon in heaven, and it scarcely seems absurd, for he seems, in virtue of his very babyhood, to have a sort of right to it and to everything.

What an event is the first tooth, appearing after painful days and sleepless nights, and infinite pity from every one about. Quite an event—an event only to be equalled, and equalled and surpassed, by his first articulate word. What word it is, is known only to the mother. She hears it distinctly days, if not weeks, before any one else can recognise anything better than well-defined

babble ; if unmistakable, certainly, as yet, inarticulate. Be it what it may, it has uttered itself first in the mother's heart before it lives on baby's lips. Bethink thee, how the angels crowd around to listen to baby's first word—first link, as they hope, in a golden chain that will one day bind together earth and heaven. Ah ! baby, many many a wise, eloquent word, it may be, those lips of thine shall speak in the aftertime, but never word so profoundly interesting to any human being as was that first broken word to thy mother ! Soon, animal instinct begins to be tempered by some manifestations of a rational nature. Baby learns rapidly more things, and more rapidly than he shall ever learn, even when the sun of intellect shall have reached its meridian. Just think of all a baby has to learn, and in so short a time—the uses of his limbs, involving, as he may see for himself if ever he comes to be an anatomist, a vast and complicated series of mechanical problems. He has to become acquainted with dangers, and how to avoid them—with difficulties, and how to overcome them. He has to read faces long before he can dream of reading books ; and it is wonderful what skill baby acquires in this art, but it is an acquirement that he will lose in great measure as he grows up. Then he is rapidly acquiring a new language, and acquiring it with such subtle touches of idiom, that never in after-life need he hope to learn another language quite as thoroughly. Then, he has to make acquaintance with a world as new to him as the world once was new to Adam. As before that great first father, so before baby, must pass the animals, each to be ticketed with its name ; then the inanimate objects—the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the green old hills, and the streets of the old



town, and the houses—each, believe you, with its different face, different with subtle touches of difference—and the trees and flowers, and lanes of the country places; and all these are photographed so accurately, and with such keen acids written into the fresh surface of the soul, that it is found, in most cases, that, when other later pictures have faded and perished, these first ones come to the surface, with all their early freshness still undimmed. Even poor old Falstaff—however his soul has been overlaid with evil experience—in the last days of his unquiet life, will babble of the green fields where his happier childhood played.

And in all this varied learning the mother is chief teacher. The father's part will come in due time, later on; but, thank God! our mothers have the first of us. Have you ever watched a mother in her home school? Well, she is clever as she never was clever before—wiser than ever she has been or could be for her sole self; far-seeing, conjecturing the future so well, that conjecture, sometimes, as by some divine right of motherhood, seems to be elevated to the domain of prophecy.

And then baby—scarcely “baby” any more—begins to be a—poet! Yes, a poet. At one time every one is, for a time, a poet when he is a child. For lo! the world is full of beauty—and no long use has yet dimmed the keen eye of the young soul. And he is open to the influence of vonder—and he is full of awe—and “the light that never was on sea or shore” is, for a time, glorifying even objects which he will afterwards learn to call common, and to think commonplace. And sometimes his young soul is lifted up on some tidal wave of passionate terror, and all these things make the world very wonderful, and make this new beginner a poet.

I, the present lecturer, remember with a vividness, which I would utterly fail to express if I sought to express it in words, the day and the hour when I first saw the sea. I sat upon the beach, literally spell-bound—overcome by an awful fear, and yet even more fascinated by some strange charm. I wished to be away, and yet could not tear myself from the sight. Now, I am sure, I was something of a poet in that hour.

When I was more or less a beginner in this weary world—about the time I first began to know that there was an extensive world beyond the town in which I was born—that great world was in a state of unusual commotion. It was the year 1848—and rumours used to come of probable and likely wars. Now no one of those who spoke freely of those things before me, not heeding the presence of a child, could ever have dreamed of the storm of terror these rumours raised in my soul. Then came an element of the preternatural to make the terror greater still. For I was told, and with the utter faith of childhood believed it to the letter—that a mysterious horseman in a soldier's cloak, spurs on heel, and sabre jingling at his side, had come riding a travel-worn steed in the gloom of the night, and had repaid the assistance of a friendly smith by a warning to be prepared for some awful doom that was to fall upon the land. I am sure that no actual doom could possibly awaken in me now anything like the emotion of terror—remember, not counterpoised, as terror would be now, by any large exercise of the reflective faculties—which I felt habitually in the days I speak of.

But there are other memories of that beginning time, not quite so dreadful, but still full of awe and wonder. There was near our house an old church tower—a ruin

with open windows—and I found myself, some way or other, in possession of the fearful knowledge that this tower was the private residence of a giant. I used to watch that tower from the window of my room for hours together, and ponder, with all the might of my young mind, over his mysterious occupations ; and, I am sure, when the shadows of the crows were brisk, I often saw him moving within. I was not afraid. I felt myself too far out of his reach for that ; but I felt the keenest interest in that giant, with just a dash of awe ; and, oh ! I wish I could feel just that way for an hour, about anything now.

There are other childish memories of which I do not care to speak ; but merely to say this about them, that if anybody knew the vast possibilities of terror in a child, a terror that will fasten its teeth into the little life, and of which the child would die rather than speak—I think if people knew this, they would, unless they were brutes, try to guard the child against such emotions. I do not suppose all children experience these as I did ; but these things, felt keenly and remembered well, have had their part in making me what I am. And what is that ? the reader may ask ; of course I answer, “I do not know ;” and equally of course, perhaps, I think to myself that I do know tolerably well. But this I *do* know, that whatever I am—I am not finished yet—nor shall be till they pull the face-cloth over my face, and fold the still hands across my breast.

## III.—ABOUT BOOKS.

IT is not going to be a learned lecture—it is not going to be even a methodical lecture. It will contain no *direct* proof of anything—so far as I am aware. It means to be simply a gossip about a subject very interesting to the lecturer, and which he hopes will be to others also so interesting in itself and in its associations, that his special treatment of it will make no great matter.

Almost my earliest plaything was a book; and probably a book shall be in my hand when the shadows deepen and it becomes too dark to read ever again. I have lived all my life amongst books; they have become for me necessities of life. I began to read very early, and being to a great extent my own guide, I read indiscriminately. It is a wonderful forcing process, that indiscriminate reading—but forced fruit is not always the most desirable. I don't care to talk about the books I like, except in a very general way. In other cases besides my own, I have remarked that it is a matter about which there exists amongst book-lovers a good deal of shyness. I like the books best that deal with character. For pure facts I have what even I feel to be a most unjustifiable contempt. Hence, most histories I meet do not fall in with—either rise above or sink below, as wills the benevolent reader—my personal tastes. They give me facts, to be sure. They give me, so to speak, the bones of the dead past—often, too, fitted together to form a most perfect skeleton. But I

keep wanting more than this. I want the flesh to grow around the bones, and muscle and nerve to stretch once more along the dead limbs, and the warm blood to flow, and the silent hearts to resume the music that death stilled ever so long ago. Most of all, I want the *character*, whether of men or times, with its hidden springs, and the motives that were far deeper down than pulse-beat or nerve-force.

The writers of the books I like always seem to have lived a little while in my own heart—thought with my brain—written with my hand; and I love them, as, had I written a book, I fain would have my readers love me. The books we like best seem to be translations of our own best thoughts, or transcripts by a skilful hand of mental phases and personal experience through which we ourselves have passed. A book, to be really liked, must appeal to something that is already in us. There is a certain poem of Tennyson's—do not imagine for a moment that I am going to tell you which it is—that almost frightens me, it is so real and so life-like a rendering of things in my own life, which I have never forgotten, which I never can forget.

There are a number of standard classical works that have, I am afraid, gone sadly out of fashion. Probably it is because they expressed phases of a life that had in it far fewer sources of excitement than our own, and that used the few it had much more cautiously than is the fashion now. In those days hearts beat more slowly; the blood was scarce so feverish, nerves were almost unknown. There is my old friend, Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia—who knows anything of him now? What chance has he against the King of Ashantee? nay, even against the (fortunately) impossible heroes, or (still more



fortunately) impossible heroines of Miss Braddon's countless fictions? Pope used to be read by every well educated person. Addison's mild prosing in the *Spectator* was in everybody's hands. Well, could any average specimen of the rising generation pass a competitive examination in the "Rape of the Lock," or the personal characteristics of Sir Roger de Coverley? I opine not, except, indeed, he were "crammed" for the occasion. Even the good old "Vicar of Wakefield" has hardly held his place; and "Moses" is far too green to amuse the boys and girls—we beg their pardon, the young ladies and gentlemen—of modern times. I am inclined to think that the classical works of any language may be defined to be, the books that everyone feels bound to talk about, but that very few feel disposed to read.

As I have already remarked, books were, first, my playthings, then my tools, now they are something of both. How well I remember the little pictured story-books that form the literature of every generation of childhood; remember them so well, and the world of enchantment they disclosed, that I can never, even yet, see without a thrill of emotion that seems like envy, but is too guileless to deserve the name, some little boy, so like the little boy I used to be far back in the golden days of the "long ago," give his whole eager little mind to the fortunes of "Jack the Giant Killer," or the heart-thrilling vicissitudes in the career of "Cinderella." How real they were, infinitely more real than the men and women of ordinary life with whom I had begun to make acquaintance, and whose mortal qualities were dwarfed into insignificance by the attributes of the men and women of heroic mould who peopled the pages of my story-books.

Real! Why, for many a day, I fondly hoped to meet the veritable "Jack," who, with a rather shamefaced sense of his vagrant propensities, I felt might possibly be concealed under the ragged habiliments of one of those "bad boys" with whom, under certain unmentionable but unforgettable penalties, I was strictly forbidden to have anything to do. I confess I felt a hankering after their society. Even thus early I began to be dimly conscious that the eccentricities of even genius and heroism have little to hope for at the hands of fathers of families, and guardians of youth. But, with all the ardour of a young radical, my sympathies were on the side of genius, eccentricities and all. Real! Ah, do I not remember with a vividness that shames the dimness of later recollections, the fever of excitement with which I planted that bean—I had been reading "Jack and the Beanstalk," and the fever of expectation with which I came, morning after morning, till my childish heart grew sick with hope deferred, looking for the mighty stalk that was to hide its head among the golden clouds.

Well, many a bean have I planted since, and so have you, reader mine, if you be the person I take you for; and watched and waited with a growing sickness of the heart, heavier than any child's heart has place for: and nothing came of it after all. We have planted our beans, all of us. Where are the hopes that never blossomed into reality, the dreams that led to nothing but a sad awaking, and a world, colder and grayer than before? Where are the promises that belied themselves, and the statue of high purpose to which fate, and, mayhap, our own indolence refused the pedestal of fulfilment? I met, years ago, "that person," that one,



of all others, whom nature formed to be the friend into whose soul and sympathetic ear I might pour the thoughts that were burning my heart, but rather than confide which to the dull ears of common sense, I would have died of the keen, sweet torture which they caused. Then, forsooth, in what I deemed an auspicious hour, I planted my bean—but it never grew. How should it? Not there—ah! why did I not see it then?—not there the generous soil where the things I longed for grew. I meet my quondam friend often; we keep up a sort of intimacy; the palest, emptiest *simulacrum* of what I, at any rate, once took to be friendship. I meet him often; he is a busy man, well known on 'Change; and the crust of years, and of something worse, has grown around him; and I would blush for shame should his shrewd, cold eye—*not* see my heart's thoughts, or the gossamer threads which fancy spins too light to be woven by pen or pencil, but—even skim over the surface of these lectures, and know them to be mine.

Nevertheless (it is a beneficent provision of nature that will have her children, of all ages, amused), nevertheless, we go on through life, from stage to stage, planting our beans; and the bean of one stage *seems* so unlike the beans of others, of whose unfruitfulness sad experience has convinced us, that we fondly hope that the last, at any rate, will grow.

It was my fortune, no long time ago, to be present at an entertainment, in which the story of "Cinderella" was produced by a number of very small children, admirably trained. I looked and listened, and childhood almost came back. I felt that peculiar sensation that travels down the spine; and the rush of tears that were kept back, only because I was ashamed—though why

should I?—to shed them in public. Nature, you see, gave us emotions, and meant them to be real gifts ; but civilisation makes us ashamed to confess to their possession. Well, I had come in company with a friend for whom I had a great respect ; a man of good sense and high honour, and many amiable qualities—no, *amiable* is not the word—I should have said many *admirable* qualities, which is often a very different thing. I had almost forgotten his presence, till, turning to him at the close, to share with him the emotion I felt, I found that he was looking unmistakably and intensely *bored*. Not a ray of the sympathy I looked for came from his cold and somewhat sleepy eye. He languidly asked me ‘ what had it all been about ? ’ “ Why,” said I, “ it was Cinderella.” “ And,” he rejoined—and by the rejoinder sank fathoms in my estimation—“ and what ” (he did not even say *who*) “ and what was Cinderella ? ” My first feeling, I must confess, was one of boundless contempt ; but it subsided, on reflection that it was more his misfortune than his fault, into an equally boundless pity. What a lustreless childhood had been his—never a ray of fancy had played around his cradle—never a spell of imagination had glorified for him the common things of childhood. I catechised him, on the spot ; and found, as I expected, that he was an utter stranger to the classics of the nursery—and, though his word may be his bond, his honour stainless, his character irreproachable—yet, oh ! not in *his* ear would I venture to pour the half sense, half nonsense that flows from our—yours and mine, dear reader—from *our* lips, in our best and brightest moments. Be well sure that *he* has never planted a bean in all his life—and the loss is his—for, let me whisper it in your ear, *sometimes*, however rarely,

a bean *does* grow, and the stalk-top hides itself in golden heavens, and becomes the ladder that lifts us up above this dull world to the land of mystery and marvel that lies beyond the clouds of life.

In due time these childish volumes, of which I still retain so kindly a recollection, were cast aside. How many a thing once precious do we cast aside, to be carried off by the ebb of the receding years. But others took their place, as other things do seize upon the vacant places in our hearts—aye, even the places that we almost swore, and sealed the oath with scalding tears, should never be filled again. As year has followed year, books have followed books. They have always been, and I have always felt them to be, my fastest and most faithful friends. Other friends might deceive—unsay to-day what yesterday they all but swore—but the favourite books keep always saying the same old thing, or, if not quite the same, yet the old thing glorified, as it were, by the application which personal experience has given it to ourselves. In these books is the noblest part of noble lives. All the fret and fever have gone out of them. The petty circumstance that encased them once, and the mean commonplace that did its best to disfigure them to contemporary eyes, all have disappeared, and left only the ethereal essence. I have been amongst men from time to time, and always with renewed thankfulness have I gone back to my world of books. The incidents of a day have jarred upon my sense of ideal fitness. I have seen some sham enthusiasm, hatefulest thing under heaven, turned back into the vile thing it was by the touch of some test, that acted like the angel's spearpoint. I have seen the vaunted disinterestedness vanish when the really desired

interest was to be served. As the wise old writer hath it, after such times I seemed "to return less a man;" and in such an hour I have felt how happy a thing it was that I could return to my books.

There are certain books that are special favourites. Like others I have my likings and dislikings—my prepossessions and my prejudices—the latter, it may be, as unreasonable as prejudices usually are—but I have a certain interest in all kinds of books. A book, *as such*, is to me a perennial source of, at least, expectation. In lonely wayside inns I have had a vague hope of finding "the fitting word" in some of the tattered volumes that were the sole deposit of the tide of travellers that had flowed in on that most solitary shore. True, I have often and often been disappointed. A "Gazetteer" or a "Ready Reckoner" makes but dismal reading—even of an "Almanac" there is not much to be made, except, indeed, there be "predictions" in it. But then, again, it has been my good fortune sometimes to light upon a treasure—an odd volume of Shakespeare, a dog's-eared copy of "The Vicar of Wakefield," or a "Robinson Crusoe" in as imperfect and dilapidated condition as the hero himself when the friendly wave threw him upon his desert island. And, believe me, never did one of those books seem to have such magic in it as such a time and under such circumstances. You see there was no other to be had, and one made the very best of it.

It often, on the other hand, happens to me to find myself in quite opposite circumstances. I enter my chamber and watch the firelight sparkle on the backs of my book-rows. There are potent spirits there silently begging of me to give them once again to light and life

With a firm determination to release some one of them, I stand puzzled to decide amongst so many rival claims. Shall I embark upon the stately swelling current that glides through the pictured page of Gibbon, or sit me down beside the glancing stream of what Macaulay called "History?" Or, shall I go farther back, and nourish lofty thoughts of men and their capabilities, with Plutarch as my guide? Or say, shall I choose rather to take my ease among the essayists? There stands Addison, waiting mildly for his turn—seeming to be conscious that he is almost too coldly classical for modern tastes. Shall the genial Elia have his claim allowed? or shall he be pushed aside by the sturdier hand of old Montaigne, so full of the acrid flavour of a personal life? While I stand debating, a brighter flash glances on the lettered back of Tennyson. Shall I open that magic page, and give, say, the full sympathy which I imagine a quiet student like myself gives oftener than busier men to the desire so wonderfully embodied in the "Ulysses:"

"To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars."

Or—and Italy, as I remember it, rises before me—shall I stand in Venice on "the Bridge of Sighs," and begin that pilgrimage of the wonderful fourth canto of "Childe Harold," which always proves to me that Byron might have been even a greater orator than he was a poet? There, before my book-rows, am I standing still, and no decision can I come to. The golden minutes roll themselves into still more golden hours, and I have opened never a book. Perhaps, after all, it is better as it is. My "brown study" may have stood me in good



stead. Through the chambers of my brain has passed a goodly procession of the great thoughts of great minds. The music of remembered passages, and the melodies that have linked themselves imperishably with golden memories of the youth when first they sounded on my spirit's ear, raise their sweet, silent tunes within my heart. Perhaps I have been doing better than reading any books, however famous. I have, as it were, been extracting the subtlest essence of many books, and that is the sweetest perfume for the chambers whether of mind or heart.

One thing I have remarked, that as life goes on we tend more and more to restrict the circle of our reading to the books we already know. No seeking now for novelty. We have learned that there is not much of novelty in a world six thousand years old, and that what appears to be novel may possibly be anything but useful. We look no more for new faces and strange voices. We turn rather to the old friends, whose every tone we know, whose every mood we have learned to recognise and appreciate; whose turns of sentiment, and very tricks of manner, have the imperceptible but so strong fascination of enjoyments that have become habitual. Long ago I used to long for a new book; now I better love a book that I have read before.

We may keep adding to our libraries, for there is a fashion in that as in other matters, but it is curious to observe the winnowing process that goes on amongst our books *that are read*. Now and again I feel, and with a pang that is almost a pang of conscience, that I am growing cold towards some author who used to strike chord that quivered into music, but that has got itself now hopelessly unstrung

But a few favourites are never dispossessed of the place they have won in our affections. They are not, perhaps—in my own case they certainly are not—the pretentiously wise books, but those whose wisdom is tinged with a not unpleasant flavour of what a “practical man” would be prompt to call nonsense. Shakespeare keeps his place always—nay, he is one who grows year by year deeper into our hearts—that is, if we have let him ever take root at all. For, let me tell you, that, of a hundred people who talk about Shakespeare, perhaps not ten have read him through, nor more than one or two read him appreciatively. I do not believe that a very young, or even a very youthful person, can at all fully taste the flavour of his preter-human wisdom. It takes time, and, above all, it takes knowledge of the world that he paints, to let us in anything like an adequate degree into the secret of his greatness. Let me tell you this about Shakspeare. To anyone who has read a play of his only once, the most natural, nay, I believe, the only natural opinion to form is, that he is a vastly overrated man. Read it over again, and you begin to get a vague, but still only a vague, idea that possibly there is much more in it than you were at all prepared for. Read again, and again, and again, and you will find the play visibly growing larger and larger to your mental vision; and when you have read it in the leisure intervals of half a busy lifetime, and brought your accumulated stock of experience to bear upon it, you will in all probability come to the conclusion that there is more in it than you are capable of taking out of it.

Indeed, it is so, in some degree, with every work of genius, of whatever kind—the more you study it the



more you admire. I remember well—and it is an experience I have in common with thousands of others—when I went for the first time into St. Peter's, I felt quite a thrill of disappointment. It did not seem, after all, so very much larger than other churches. But as I paid visit after visit, it began to grow, and grow, and grow—to broaden and lengthen, and to grow higher, till at length it became full grown, and made the place it shall keep for ever in my memory, in all its marvellous vastness. I remember, too, in the neighbouring Vatican, the "Apollo Belvidere" seemed at first sight "a handsome young man." There was, however, a "god" in him, that only revealed itself after many visits. Not far off is the "Laocöon"—a vast, struggling, unsightly, distorted mass of marble. But, as I soon found, the unsightliness and distortion were not in *it*, but in my unaccustomed eye; and, when the eye grew accustomed, they were there no longer.

I love the humorists of every clime, and time, and tongue. I believe they take the firmest hold, and keep it longest in our affections. And why should they not?—they so well express the world we live in. That mixture of the grave and gay, the serious and the ludicrous, has it not been meeting us everywhere in nature and amongst men? This light irony, has not circumstance been constantly presenting us with just such? Things felt so keenly that one fears to give them any vent but a laugh, lest the very floodgates of feeling should be broken up; toleration like the toleration of nature and of time; the saying, musical with very wisdom, attuning itself to the jingle of bells in the fool's cap; the flowers springing up freshly on a grave where the heart's scalding tears have fallen, and the hopes of a life lie hidden

away : these things we have known before we met them in the pages of the books we love. The humorists seem, at times, to strike human life and the world in which we live in the very "bull's eye."

Anyone who has ever made acquaintance with the ancient classics will feel impelled to recur to them from time to time. Their special excellence is the excellence of *style*. The world is wiser now, or ought to be, than it was in those far back times. Experience has accumulated, and is at the disposal of anyone who wishes to use it. An article in a newspaper, to-day, may possibly contain a more useful philosophy than that of Plato ; but the article will live only for a day, Plato for ever. Believe me, the great names in literature are rarely those of the men who, with the hands of giants and the hearts of heroes, have gone into the quarries of human thought, and hewed and blasted huge boulders from the mass. Rather they are the names of those who took the rough, undressed stones, and shaped and polished them, and built them into enduring structures—whether the temple, or the palace, or the domestic home—places where all generations come to pray, or to be guided, or to be happy.

These old classic writers lived at a time very favourable to the cultivation of mere style. The world was in no hurry then—there was no press always hungry, and a man could write without the distraction of a "printer's devil" at his elbow clamoring for "copy." They did not feel bound to write till they had really got something to write about : and when they did begin, they devoted their whole mind to the task of expressing well what they had to say. And when they said a thing well, they strove to say it still better, and they

corrected and polished, till an ode of Horace may possibly represent a larger *quantity* (I will say nothing of *quality*) of mental labour than a whole volume of modern poetry.

My Greek, like that of a great many people I know, has grown somewhat rusty, but it is not hard to muster up enough to enjoy an occasional dip into Homer. Like most great things, it is simple; and like many a simple thing it can go straight to the heart. The music of those grand hexameters seems to me to be different even *in kind* from the music of other hexameters. There is a roll, and a ring, and a resonance in them that I find nowhere else. I can well imagine the savage chiefs in the old palaces of Pylos starting up with a loftier excitement than any that Chian wine had ever caused, as the blind old bard rolled forth his sonorous chant. More than that, when I read a passage sometimes, and get fully into the *swing* of the melody, I begin dimly to realise the truth of those stories, that to northern ears are apt to sound somewhat apocryphal of the marvellous effects produced by the Rhapsodists.

There is another class of books very different from the ancient classics. I have occasion sometimes to dip into the old scholastic theologians, notably into the great "Summa" of their prince and master, St. Thomas Aquinas. Let me tell you this about that wonderful book, there is scarcely anything in it I admire more heartily than its mere style. You may possibly wonder at my assertion. The Latin is uncouth enough—the construction at times such as "would make Quintillian stare and gasp;" yet, you never read a book—not even Tacitus—in which the writer so concisely and so exactly says that thing precisely, neither more nor less, which

it was his purpose to say. You cannot afford to overlook the most apparently insignificant adverb. There are no make-weight or make-measure words thrown in ; it is the photograph of very severe and very accurate thought. Nor do I think there is any book that so much flatters the understanding of the man who understands it, or thinks he does. There is a directness about it, and an absence of superfluous explanation, that, of themselves, express most unbounded confidence in the intelligence of the reader. Here is a man who has painfully thought out the highest and the deepest questions, and yet he is not afraid to trust you with them in a sort of "short-hand" rendering. To trust one's reader is characteristic of genius. The writer who systematically distrusts the intelligence of his reader has much more reason to distrust his own.

Some reader may ask me, "What *are* your favourite books?" "Reader," I answer, "what are yours?" If you were sentenced to life-long imprisonment, and were, by some relenting touch upon the spirit of your judge, allowed to select, say, half a dozen books to amuse you for life—what volumes would you select? That is a good way to discover favourites—remember, not as you valued the privilege, favourites of a day, but favourites that would keep their place through the tedious hours of a prisoner's life. Make out the list for yourself. Do not imagine that I am going to submit mine to your shrewd analysis. Bless me! what a foundation such a list would make for a theory of character. I confess to Shakspeare and Cervantes ; after these the names that would make up the half dozen might possibly surprise you ; for, there are as strange whims and vagaries connected with book-tastes as with any other tastes in the world.

I do not believe there is any surer way—but is any way quite sure?—of discovering a man's intellectual character than by inspecting his collection of books. That is, however, if he have collected them himself, and especially if he be one whose means do not warrant indiscriminate purchase. "Tell me your company and I will tell you what you are," morally or socially—"tell me your books and I will tell you what you are," intellectually. But in both cases, provided the choosing is your own. Much as I love books, I do not think I should much care to have bequeathed to me one of those fine libraries, the shelves of which have been furnished by the yard. I like my books to grow around me out of the soil of my own personal tastes. There are, moreover, certain favourite authors whom I should no more like to see in a new edition than I should like to see a venerable friend discard the staid costume that had become part of himself, and appear in the height of some fashion of to-day. In such case, book and friend would cease to be quite the same.

I look again to my book-shelves as I write, and I can trace there the mental *strata* of my intellectual growth. To be sure, some of them are now so deep down that they have to be dug for in the depths of memory. But these are, after all, the very foundations of strata that are more recent. We may outlive our intellectual tastes of various stages, but we never outlive their effects. There is a subtle chain of connexion that binds all together, even where the first link and the latest are so strikingly dissimilar as "Jack and the Beanstalk" and the "Summa" of St. Thomas.

Reader, are you well-nigh tired of my gossiping lecture, which the love I bear the subject of it has made



thus long? We plant our beans, and mostly they never grow. We take hold on the world with all our hands, but somehow the world spins away, and we cannot hold it. The prizes cost us tears, and sometimes very life-blood, and yet are never won; or, if won, are not quite the things for which the eager spirit panted. Time was, too, when the world, as it lay before our youthful feet, seemed a very flower-garden. Now, where are our flowers? Ah! there remain only those withered leaves and faded blossoms that the past has laid between the pages of the book that is hastening fast to the last blank page where they may engrave the skull and crossed bones and write "finis." Our flowers now are only such as these; or, if happily there be any *growing* in our lives, they suck their freshness from the graves of the hopes we buried long ago. These things happen, reader mine, and more than these. Friends are not so faithful, hearts are not so true, the sky is not so bright, the wine is not so sparkling, the wit is not so keen, the rich poetry of life has faded into hueless prose. When these things happen, bless your happy fortune if you have had, and still retain, a love for books. You can sit with them "in the gloaming," and by their aid, reconstruct—and in fairer form—the world that seems to have fallen in pieces around you.

## IV.—ABOUT SYMPATHY.

THERE are some things that cost no money, things, indeed, that cannot by possibility be brought under a standard of money value, but that yet are the dearest things that a man can purchase. Foremost amongst these is sympathy. A desire for sympathy is one of those epicene qualities that may either make a character or mar it. Without it few great things will be attempted; with it hardly any great thing will be accomplished. For, great things do not get themselves done without opposition; and opposition encountered and overcome is not likely to generate sympathy. You may fight your enemy, and conquer him, and having conquered him you may have a right to expect his submission, but you do not expect his sympathy. And so far as that sympathy had an antecedent value in your eyes, so far would your blows have been weaker and your victory less assured. You may look for the sympathy of those whom you merely seek to please, but those whom you benefit largely may repay you in other coin, but rarely will they repay you by sympathy. Indeed, one general maxim on the whole matter is, sympathy is one of those things that never profit when they are made the ends of action.

Do you want a test of a strong nature? Well, observe how far a man can dispense with sympathy. That is, after all, what few men can do without. If they do not find it at home, they will seek it elsewhere, and will



pay almost any price for it. Can you live alone? I do not mean physically apart from your fellow-men, but mentally isolated from those around you. Can you go on for months and years, thinking thoughts they cannot think, pursuing aims they cannot appreciate, toiling for ends they so little understand that, did they even know them, they would be certain to undervalue them? Can you let the dull world go its way, and send the noiseless messengers of thought to do your behests in a world whose mere existence your neighbours, the daily critics of your outer life, have never even imagined? Can you hear the unappreciative comments on such husks of inner purpose as outward actions are, and be disturbed by them as little as might be the poet in whose soul the sights and sounds of nature were shaking themselves together into song, by the multitudinous hum of insects in the summer grass?

If you can do all this, you may be sure your nature is a strong one. But then, probably, you would not be quite a pleasant person to live with. When a man asks no sympathy, he does not pay the natural price of it in those thousand courtesies and kindnesses that sweeten human intercourse. If a man does not value my sympathy, he cannot much value myself; or, if he do value me at all, it will be but as an infinitesimally small item in the great sum that has humanity for its total.

But those who want it will pay almost any price for it; not only a reasonable price, but an unreasonable one.

We all know the unfortunate man who "can't say No." We know how he sells himself into bondage; how he mortgages time, and talent, and capabilities of service; how he squanders his very character bit by bit

to buy the momentary sympathy which he cannot for the life of him deny himself. He never seems to see—it being *his* case not ours, *we* see it of course, *we*, the wise—that at each successive payment of the price the quality of the article purchased must necessarily deteriorate. Sympathy, no doubt, is a valuable thing; but, like other valuable things, its value has a limit, and when the limit is exceeded it ceases to be valuable.

This is what constitutes the danger of a craving for sympathy; a danger constantly illustrated in the case of “popular men.” Popularity is sympathy in a very palpable, not to say gross, form, and when one has tasted it often it is apt to spoil the nice discrimination of his mental and moral palate. Then, “Who peppers the highest is surest to please.” It is like stimulants and narcotics in general. Its use tends to merge into abuse. The victim cannot do well with it, and, as he thinks, not at all without it; and as a drunkard will sell his personal belongings to procure the liquor of his choice, so the “popular man” will barter, first his good taste, then his delicacy of feeling, then his high sense of honour, then his good nature, then his very principles and the character which grew them, for his dram of popular applause.

It is said that in some of the gin-shops in London the counters are perforated to let the drainings through into a reservoir, where slowly grows to vile perfection a liquor aptly called “all sorts.” The tippler drinks his gin as pure as he is ever likely to get it, so long as he can pay the standard price. But the day comes when money is scarce, and the undiminished craving has to be satisfied, at lesser price, by a dram of “all sorts.” Let a man run the gauntlet of “mobs,” let him speak

much to men on a lower level of intellect and culture than himself, and he has need to guard both mind and tongue. Mob-applause is, at its best, a fiery spirit; but I have seen those who contracted a taste for it come in the end to still the cravings of a shattered moral constitution by maddening draughts of "all sorts."

There is a certain process which I may call discounting sympathy, that often leads to fatal mistakes. It is illustrated very aptly, on a small scale, in the case of "huffy" people, who are fond of making themselves miserable by keen endurance of purely imaginary wrongs, in the hope, fortunately in most cases disappointed, of being very much pitied. But this very unheroic mood of "huffiness," connotes a larger feeling that often assumes heroic proportions. I allude to a certain well-known mood of human nature that seems to take a keen delight in pain. The general rule, of course, is, that men like pleasure and dislike pain. But there is enough in the history of humanity to prove that there has been in some men an attraction towards pain, a sort of fierce delight in suffering, as if they were afraid that life would sink into torpidity unless it were stirred up, as it were, with some red-hot iron, or other instrument of torture.

The thing I speak of is something very different indeed from pure religious asceticism. It seems to be very much a matter of "race," and is found in its extremest form amongst races like those of India, whose other mental faculties are vastly over-weighted by their imagination. In fact, it is a moral disease that arises from low vitality and powerful imagination, not, or not for the time being, under the control of the reflective faculties. Have you ever met a case of it? Here is one, not an uncommon one by any means.

A wayward child in a fit of sulks will sometimes attempt self-starvation. The little imp (for the time being "imp" is merely a provisional epithet) the little imp keeps himself apart from the family circle and broods over some imaginary wrong. He will stand it no longer. He will shake from his tiny feet the dust of a world that is not worthy of him. He will deprive of the light of his presence the friends who do not value him as he deserves. He will, by a premature ending, harrow the hearts that have treated him unjustly. So his young imagination works. He feels a fierce joy in every additional pang of hunger, and puts aside as impertinent the suggestions of the young stomach, to make due submission and go to supper. He pictures himself lying white and dead, and pictures the friends, whom, by an odd complexity of moral feeling, he knows to have dearly loved him all the time, shedding their unavailing tears, deploring their perversity, and loading themselves with reproaches without number for the hardness of their hearts. So the young lad dreams, and pities himself, till at last, probably, his mother comes and capitulates, and he goes to supper.

Well, there is no time of life in which men will not sometimes play the child. There is the same self-pity, and the craving for sympathy, and the delicious feeling of being ill-used, and "oh! how sorry people will be when they come to see how badly they have been treating me." All very pleasant for a while, but the man, too, gets hungry. The world, which is only a step-mother, the world will not capitulate, but goes its way; and cares wonderfully little about him or his fit of sulks; and if he does not soon come back to his work, the world gets some one else to do it, and proceeds—oh! rare poetical

justice—to forget his very existence. So, if he bethink himself of these things, he will, if he be wise, come out of his sulks, and smooth his ruffled plumes, and practise before his looking-glass such a smile as will make everyone think that he never was out of humour at all. He will do this, unless, indeed, he be that rarest of rare things, a man absolutely indispensable : as indispensable, say, as Achilles, whose heroic fit of sulks so grandly opens and inspires the song of Greece's childhood.

I have called the process I have been describing "discounting sympathy." The moral of the name is obvious. A prudent man will never discount a bill unless he has good reasons to think that funds will be forthcoming to meet it.

There are some curious cases to be met with of this process of "discounting sympathy." Perhaps none more curious than those cases in which men anticipate a sympathy which they well know they will be quite incapable of enjoying. Few people make a will who do not make it as with an eye to a highly probable contingency, that they will be present when it takes effect. It is the "dead hand" with which they strive to lay hold upon the future; but they cannot, for the life of them, help feeling as if it would be a live hand. To hear the minute directions some people give about their funerals, it is very evident that they delude themselves into the belief that they will be chief mourners, and *conscious* chief mourners, on the melancholy occasion. I wonder do they ever picture to themselves the hearse *coming back*, with the waving plumes stowed away inside, and the horses in full gallop, and the mutes on the box laughing, as if *they* had never had occasion to be buried.



Indeed, death has a very disturbing effect upon sympathy, both on a man's sympathy for himself, and other men's sympathies for him. A man who, if it were necessary, or even useful, would submit to a most painful surgical operation, will yet shudder at the notion of a scientific hand sounding with a scalpel the tenantless walls of the house of clay from which the soul has flitted. But it is not alone a man's self, whose views about his dead body are, at first sight, at any rate, somewhat inexplicable. The views of survivors are strange enough in their way.

There is no part of the vast change that death makes in a man so wonderful as the very different view it causes the survivors to take of his dead body. You have a friend, father, mother, sister, brother. Well, your friend dies. The soul goes away, only, as you know, for a time; but the body is, for the moment, superficially, at any rate, unchanged. There is the hand that pressed your hand, there the lips on which your lips were laid, there the eyes, wide open, that used to light up at your approach; there, in short, is the outward semblance that your friend wore, and in which he shall be remembered, till memory of him shall be no more. But, confess the truth, you have grown somewhat afraid of this body that you knew so well. You shrink when you touch it, shudder when you kiss it, turn your eyes away when you meet the stare of those wide-open eyes. Suppose it were secured from corruption, should you like to keep it near you always?

But there is a great truth under this apparently unreasonable feeling. *That* is not your friend. Feature is there, and form not yet defaced; but the hands are lifeless, and the lips are mute, and the tongue has never

a word to say ; and if the dearest friend the dead man ever had were to whisper in his ear, the voice he loved would kindle no light in the glazed eye, nor wake one flutter in the silent heart. *That*, surely, is not your friend—is not a man. Something has gone out of it, that made that lifeless thing a man. When that “dull, cold ear” shall hear a sound again, it shall be the sound of the great trumpet, and the soul shall be back once more, and he shall be a man, your friend again, and for ever.

You remember that wonderful Ulysses, the man of many counsels. He had, when occasion presented itself, a very pardonable desire to hear, with his own ears, the Siren song, about which so many sad stories had been told in times past. Nay, I think the desire was more than pardonable—that it was laudable. I, for one, have always sympathised with him in this desire of his. Well, he contrived to compass his desire. His ears were charmed by the sound that none had heard unharmed but himself. And in the after-time at Ithaca, the memory of that song must have been one of the most precious things garnered in the capacious mind, that had filled itself from so many a source with images of strange cities and foreign men. But how did he manage to hear the song, unscathed by the ruin it was wont to bring? He was a wise man, and in nothing wiser than in this, that he was one of the few who are able to reap the harvest of another's sowing—to garner wisdom from other men's experience. He had himself tied to the vessel's mast ; and as the rowers swept past the fatal isle, full in his open ears came the sound that had stolen away heart and brain from men less wise than he. He, too, felt its full, unstinted force—felt the



heart-strings quiver, and the tide of feeling rising to its flood, and the passionate longing which he knew was madness, to break the bonds that held him, and leave the bark that bore his fortunes and his friends to cast one other wasted life upon the fatal shore. But the mast was firm, and the cords were strong. He swept past, and the enchanting strain died upon his ear, and passed into a harmless memory of his chequered life.

There is a moral in the story ; nay, why should I say a moral ? There are more than one, as is usually the case with those old Greek stories, which are palimpsests : the surface stories of which, beautiful as they are, are written over mysteries that underlie human life.

For my present purpose, let it be enough to pick out one moral. Sympathy is a thing pleasant to have—laudable to desire ; it inspires purpose, and sweetens effort ; it gladdens the heart that was growing sad with lonely thoughts ; it nerves the flagging energies, and cheers the overwrought spirit that was nigh to fainting, if not to death. All the same, its voice is a Siren voice, and has, ere now, spoiled high purposes, and ruined lives that might have been noble. Hear it, if you will, for it is passing sweet. But first see that the mast that towers toward heaven—the mast of duty—be firm in its place. Tied to it with the triple cords of Faith, and Hope, and Love, it will strike upon your ear, however sweet, yet with not a tithe of the sweetness of the inner song that is borne upon ears that know how to listen, from the spot in our future, yours and mine, where life-waves break their last upon the shores of the great Hereafter.

## V.—ABOUT MONEY.

IT was May-day, not only by the calendar, but by virtue of the sunshine, and the balmy breeze, and the twitter of countless birds, and the graceful play of light and shadow, and the magic blue that lay upon the distant mountains; but above all, it was May-day by the music in the heart that these things made. It was just the day to bring out any latent poetry that had been frozen in the spirit during the dull wintry days that were so gone that they seemed gone for ever. It was just the day when books are flung aside with an impatience that smacks of ingratitude, and the wakening beauty of the outer world seems to draw the student as by a spell to the woods and fields. On such a day there rises a happy tumult in the heart. Feelings strive to rush into words. Words seem to shake themselves together into music; thought seems deepening to ecstasy. There was, too—product of these blissful factors—that strange, delicious feeling which you, reader, probably know as well as I—the feeling that something great, and grand, and eventful is about to happen. I have felt it often: oftener when I was younger than I ever feel it now. It seems to be Nature herself speaking within us—*Natura*, what is about to be, what not so much *is*, as is ever *becoming*.

Have you ever felt that there was something still unrevealed, and fairer far than anything that was revealed in the fairest landscape on which you ever looked? Has the sunrise ever seemed as if it were about to bring some

thing brighter than even the light that slowly broadened into day? Have you ever had a vague, delicious hope—nay, for the moment it was a certainty—that the pale gold and the red gold of the sunset were about to be flung open to let out a vision fairer than sunset ever was? Has something unutterable lain behind the noblest word you ever heard uttered; something impalpable, yet so real and so beautiful, lurked beneath the surface of picture or of poem, or fair face or strain of music, till the more exquisite grew your appreciation of nature or of art the more a tinge of melancholy stole upon your happiest thoughts; till beneath the last analysis of some subtler than earthly chemistry the spirit of joy and the spirit of sadness seemed to be but accidental forms of some one unchanging essence? You felt that what you saw and heard was not all; however great, still not all. All this was but the Work. The Worker was under it giving it whatever it had of value or of beauty; and you began to feel how much of sublimest poetry is in those verses of the Epistle to the Romans, which I need not quote here, but which you will find in the twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second, and twenty-third verses of chapter the eighth.

You understand me, reader mine. For if you do not, then, so far as you are concerned, I have been talking nonsense. Probably, too, if you do not understand me you are one whose attention I have hitherto secured under false pretence. For, was not your eye caught, and the spirit within you stirred, by the title of this lecture. "Here," you said, "is no rhapsody—forbid it—money, whose honoured name stands written above the paper." Yet this lecture is, or at all events will be, about money. But I shall take a way of my own to reach my subject.

On this particular May-day I had that feeling of which I spoke : a feeling which I can no better describe than by saying that it was a feeling of waiting for something that was about to happen. It was a presentiment. Do I believe in presentiments ? Well, at any rate, I believe in those that get themselves fulfilled ; in all others I have no belief whatever. I believe they existed in your mind if you tell me they did, but they meant little or nothing, as is the case with many things that find their way into the best of minds. Not but that these presentiments, like some prophecies, tend to fulfil themselves. But most people's presentiments amount to this, that "something is about to happen," and as a matter of fact something generally does. Many other people have very definite presentiments, but, strange to say, they never seem to know they had them till after their fulfilment—in which case, however admirable they may be, they seem of no manner of use.

Now, what came of my presentiment in the present instance was just this. On the May-day in question I had strolled out to take my fill of landscape and genial weather. On my way I picked up an acquaintance of mine—a man of hard head, and not very soft heart, entirely wanting in the matter of sentiment ; and, so far as it entered at all into his consciousness, proud of the want. Yet, a most respectable man, exemplary even in many relations of life. Just such a man as a poet with an interval of hard common sense might make executor to his will, in the improbable contingency of a poet having a large complicated estate to leave behind him. A man, in short, who set his feet firm on the earth, as if he believed in *it*, and who had a hard grasp of facts, especially of disagreeable facts, and of

the world in general. For it is a truth, whether melancholy or not I leave you to judge, that there are people who have neither sentiment nor poetry in them, who have not the faintest appreciation of the beautiful apart from the useful, to whom, in fact, the useful comes with a somewhat stronger guarantee when it comes in a garb of unsightliness, and who are, nevertheless, very respectable members of society. Indeed, I am not sure but they *are* society; for, as a general rule, such persons hold the purse, and give some general direction to the game of life, and pay the piper to many dances, fantastic and otherwise. I believe them to be eminently respectable. I know them to be useful; but, I confess, in personal intercourse, I find them exasperating. There is a lady of my acquaintance, a *materfamilias* who has pruned her olive branches with a skill beyond all praise but who is *so* matter-of-fact, that when I am in her company I have to occupy myself in making a mental catalogue of her undeniable and undoubted virtues, lest I should be tempted to forget my manners, or forego them, and offer her that insult piled on injury which is involved in telling a genuine woman to hold her tongue.

Voltaire said, "It is the misfortune of good people that they are cowards." Well, the "*honnêtes gens*" whom I know, are not exactly cowards, for they will fight for the things they really value—though what they really value is not always what they say, or even think they value; but they are stupid and commonplace to a degree. Yes, as stupid, say, as one of those dull, gray days, on which, nevertheless, the grass springs freshly; as commonplace as the long unsightly furrow where the corn grows that feeds the millions, and makes poetry *and* lectures possible.



We walked on together, my friend and I, he thinking his thoughts, I mine. I fell into the not uncommon mistake of supposing his thoughts to be of a piece with mine. I looked upon the scene before me, and it was a fairy scene. This summer, as indeed in every summer that eyes have looked upon, the world seemed to have been created over again. The sun shone, the trees were in the cool freshness of their early green, the river in its winding seemed to reveal, presiding over apparent caprice, a personal taste for the fairest spots, and the blue mountain in the distance had all the softness of a cloud. I turned to my companion and said—it was not exactly what I should have said to a more kindred spirit, unconsciously to myself I was toned down by his proximity—I said, stretching out my arm, somewhat oratorically, “Is not this fine?”

“Yes,” said he, after a judicious pause; “yes, the land is not bad; it is well worth three pounds an acre.”

I suppose he was right in his estimate. He was just the man who was likely to be accurate. To him it would be worth just that. Not three pounds, but priceless it was to me, whose landed possessions are limited to the temporary loan I take for any time being of the spot on which I plant my feet—a small estate, but then my head points upwards to the whole concave heaven, and sun, and moon, and stars are as much mine as anybody else’s, be he who he may.

But that “three pounds” remained in my mind as a solid fact, reminding me that there are people in the world, and not a few, who not only value money, but think money, and speak money, and have a habit so sedulously cultivated as to have passed into an instinct of bringing everything to the standard of its money



value. It set me thinking of money myself. What is it? Is it funded labour? as political economists will tell you. It may be; but when it comes into relations with living beings who not only labour, but think, and feel, and have their spells of gladness, and their glooms of sorrow, who feel not only the hunger of the stomach that can be stilled or stayed, but also that hunger of the heart which nor wine-cup nor husks of swine can satisfy, which even the finer food of lofty thought and far-reaching sympathy that one human spirit can offer to another leave still unappeased—then money must have new, and ever new, definitions. Let us try a few.

Money is desire capitalised. It is imagination ready-made for those who, without it, would not have enough to make them human. It is another name for possibility. nay, it is more than mere possibility, it is power. It is independence in the raw state, that may be worked up into many fabrics. Nor are these fine things to say about it. All these definitions look two ways. There is good desire and bad. Imagination may be a white witch or a black. Power in itself has no morality, it borrows it from its use. These fabrics which the loom of independence sends out are of all kinds of colours and sometimes stained in the weaving with tears and blood.

It is commonly thought that money is rather over-valued than under-valued. But of the two, I think a greater number of foolish things are said against it than in its favour. There is a deal of unwisdom extant on the subject. Let us say this much about money: wherever it is found, it represents many things that are even morally desirable. Money represents patience, and industry, and self-control, and perseverance, and no small

share of intellectual acuteness. In short, it represents what may be called the fibrous elements of a good moral constitution. Observe, I do not say that the present possessor of money has these fine qualities; he may be, and often is, a poor creature enough. But where money is, these qualities either are or were in proportionate vigour. Just as a good constitution is not a virtue, may not co-exist for the time being with virtuous living, but it is an infallible sign that somewhere in the ancestral line there was no mean share of virtuous living. Longevity, again, is not in itself a moral attribute; but show me a man who lives to ninety, and I will show you a man one or more of whose paternal or maternal ancestors supplied the moral basis, without which these ninety years were a physical impossibility. So it is with money. In the hands in which it finds itself just now it may connote nothing desirable; but it has a history, and at some point in that history it found its origin in things that were highly desirable.

There are two classes of moneyed people, as widely different as the poles. Of the one class it may be said, "they have money;" of the other, "money has them." For the latter class I have an unfeigned pity, diluted with a strong dash of contempt. But those who really own their money, and illustrate their perfect mastery of it in their conduct, are amongst those men who, whatever sentiment they awaken, escape the censure that is implied by pity. To put the same thought in another shape: Some people look on money as a means, others as an end. Would-be moralists have sometimes better intention than discrimination, and class both in the same category. The man I really pity, and with a pity that has as little in it of censure as pity can have, is the man,

not uncommonly to be met with, who began to seek money under the enthusiasm of noble ends which he saw it might subserve, but on whose enthusiasm some blight of circumstance fell, till it withered and died, and the ghost of it seized on the means and converted them into ends. The man became in some degree a miser; but often, in the wills of such men, you will see the "dead hand" busy amid the ruins of olden castles in the air.

How far more I might have written in some such strain I know not, but my thoughts were broken by a visit from one to whom I have given a previous place in these lectures, under the title of "my cynical friend."

"I find," said he, "that you have been putting me into print, and I can't say I quite like the figure I cut. It is said to be a good thing to see ourselves as others see us, but, perhaps, it is not an agreeable thing, and then perhaps your eyes are not the best possible." All this time I could see that he was not ill-pleased to have even his peculiarities paraded in this volume, and I had long since discovered that the title "cynical" had quite won his heart. The subject on which I was engaged was one that just suited his peculiar turn of mind. He was at the same time kind-hearted and whimsical. He was never happier than when demolishing a truism or upholding a paradox, in both which processes, I suspect, he was largely influenced by just the same class of feelings as would prompt him to despise self-complacent respectability, and pity the sorrows of a homeless cur, or a half-starved child.

"Money," said he, when I had worked him up, not merely to the speaking point, but to the dissertating point; "money—do *you* know what money really is?

I confess *I* don't. It is a very complicated question, going deep down to the very roots of economic science—aye, and touching many sciences that are more than economic. Perhaps you think, as I confess I do, that a sovereign is a sovereign, always pretty much the same value. But I am told it is no such thing, that money fluctuates in value like any other commodity, that it is cheap and dear by turns. Then as to paper money, why it involves such intricate problems that I never cared to understand it. But you and I are concerned rather about the moral aspect of money.

“‘The desire of money is the root of all evil.’ There is the standard text, which most persons would take for their discourses on the subject. But I think very many who use it seem to read it as if not the desire, and the inordinate desire, but the money itself, and the best regulated desire for it, were the roots of evil. It is not so, however. There was plenty of evil before money was even invented. There was no mint, except in a botanical sense, in Paradise, the day that Eve stood looking longingly at the fair-seeming fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. There was not, I suppose, a coin on the face of the earth, the day that Cain struck down his brother. But money being a sort of universal standard, to which most human things can be submitted in some shape or other, has come to symbolise, in many minds, the concentration of all the evil desires of man's heart. But there is good in the world as well as evil, and good desires in hearts as well as bad; and money sometimes symbolises the good.

“Dr. Johnson said, in his wise way, ‘Men are seldom less mischievously engaged than when they are engaged in making money.’ I am afraid it is true; and if so it

is the severest satire ever penned on human nature. Young people usually have a contempt for money, that is just as unreasonable, and, perhaps, quite as harmful, as the idolatry of the elders. Even the people, God help them, who have given themselves up to money-loving and money-grubbing, have something to say for themselves that may make them compare, not so unfavourably as you might suppose, with the opposite class of spendthrifts. First, they know what they want; believe me, a great advantage from the point of view of this, or, indeed, any other world. There is a great deal of vague discontent in the world running under the surface, and poisoning the springs of life; and, perhaps, it is as much due to puzzle-headedness about ends as to anything else.

“In fact, I suspect that by the time a man is, say, forty, he has become decidedly sceptical about the existence of happiness. You see by that time the play is played out in all its scenes; and the future can be little else than a repetition of the same scenes, *minus* the charm of novelty. The nervous system has been fully developed, and every nerve stricken by the hand of circumstance, has given forth its separate note, till a man has heard the total of all the music that can be coaxed out of the harp of life. Then the strings get relaxed and out of tune, and the strain begins to be doleful enough. No wonder he should get discontented. He finds himself getting slightly bald, and (not slightly) corpulent. Most things are ‘used up;’ one day begins to be very like another, and every day is cold and gray. All his illusions are gone—his very beliefs have lost their glow. He doesn’t see much use in living, except that the act of living stands in the way of the act of



dying; and he is afraid to die, perhaps not without reason. Then, in seven cases out of ten, he takes to money-making. I am afraid in two cases out of the other three, he takes to drink, and makes the smouldering fires of life give out one last fierce blaze by pouring alcohol upon them. However, the greater number take to—money. Blame them if you will, and as you ought; but pity them too. Youth and youthful good spirits get many of this world's goods, without the asking. The time comes when they are gone, and then the glitter of hoarded gold seems a substitute for the smile of the lip and the sparkle of the eye that used to win so much. They take to money, and then they see their way more clearly before them. That is precisely their advantage. It may be a dirty way enough, but, such as it is, they see it. They know what they want, and nine-tenths of human disappointments are caused by the absence of such knowledge. Men waste their power, and lose their time, and cultivate the field of life with little or no result, simply because they never put clearly before them the object of their striving. But let a man take to money-grubbing, and he has no room to doubt what it is he wants. The passion gives a grim simplicity to his intercourse with his neighbour. Knowing what he wants, he goes straight to it, overleaping in his passion any obstacle, be it moral or other, that blocks the way.

“Again, he has the advantage of having a definite standard for everything; and so, there is scarcely any question on which his mind is not quite made up. You and I may be puzzled, from time to time, to make a due estimate of something; but we have never acquired the habit of concentrating the effort of judgment to the answering the one question—‘What is its money value to me?’



“I suppose money-grubbers have their uses in the vast system of human things, as noxious animals and plants have in the system of nature. I think a philosopher, taking a large view of things, would not bear quite so hard upon them as a young, enthusiastic, unphilosophical person would be inclined to do. You see most men are, either by original constitution or acquired habit, of such sort that it becomes the practical question with regard to them — *not* how to get them to do most good, *but* how to get them to do the least harm. And here Dr. Johnson’s wise saying comes in aptly enough. For avarice seems, in one respect, to outrival charity itself. Charity covers a multitude of sins, avarice swallows a multitude. Of course sins so swallowed are very bad diet, and poison the blood. But then they are kept out of the sight of decent people. The money-seeker finds out very soon that vice has a high tariff of its own, and that most vices are very costly, both in money and time, and nerve, and muscle, and physical constitution, all of which may be transmuted into so much gold. He gives up the vices. Avarice, big bloated serpent, swallows them out of sight, and then he begins to seem, at any rate, to do some kind of duty towards society. He develops, usually, into the traditional Pharisee. He is not an adulterer, nor (openly) unjust, nor (discoverably) an extortioner, as are also those publicans. True, he may be hateful in the sight of Heaven. But that is his own look-out. In the meantime, he pays his taxes, promotes commerce, helps to increase the national wealth, is a stanch conservative, pays his debts, because credit is money, hates everything revolutionary, and is altogether a model member of society; of society, that is, as it exists in

this world. How it may fare with him in the world to come is another matter. I scarcely think he could make himself pleasant in celestial circles. Probably the publicans would find themselves more at home beyond the sun and the fixed stars. There is," he concluded, "a subject on which I should like to write. It is 'in praise of misers.' I commend it to you. You could make anything at all out of it. Hang them all, I say, but before you hang them judge them as justly as you can." And here ends the dissertation of my cynical friend. I only hope he may be satisfied with my report.

There were many other things, and, I would have you believe, fine things I had to say about money. But my friend's dissertation has been, out of all proportion, long. Possibly it may have been worse than long; it may have been tedious. But even at the risk of trespassing on my reader's patience, there are just a few words I want very much to say about the use of money.

The use of money in large sums affects the imagination. Let me tell you that its judicious use in very small quantities has the power of affecting the heart. Have you, reader—you to whom a shilling or a half-crown is of no very great consequence—have you ever ascertained, by personal experiment, the amount of happiness, or of something as nearly like happiness as any substitute for the real but unattainable article that men have succeeded in discovering, a well invested shilling can purchase both for you, the owner, and for others of God's creatures. Perhaps, it has never occurred to you what an amazing phenomenon to some yearning eyes might be that regularity of daily meals that to you has become commonplace in its inevitable recurrence. Meals, and regular meals, are to most of us, who read

and who write, a sort of law of nature, a suspension of which would be a miracle, and not an agreeable one. When we are ready, so is breakfast. The clock strikes, and dinner is on the table. Supper, if you care for it at all, has come to assume the aspect of a duty of your state of life.

Well, with all people it is not so. It was not so with a very little girl whom I happen to know. Her mother found it hard enough to keep her little body and soul together; and the days of three meals, or even two (of such poor sort) were red-letter days. But in their poor calendar there were many black days and bitter fasts.

It is not a case which I mention on account of its uncommonness. It is common enough, heaven knows. But I mention this case, because this particular little girl happened to say one of those wise things that sometimes come "out of the mouths of infants," and which furnishes one of the best texts I know, on which you, reader, might, and I hope will, preach to yourself (no more eloquent preacher, believe me) a little sermon about what might be done with your odd sixpences.

One day, after many hard days, there happened to be breakfast. This breakfast was supplied by the shilling of a charitable neighbour. Let an algebraic symbol hide him for the present, God can read under it, and let us call him Mr. X. The mother had something besides breakfast for her little girl. Like other mothers, whose hands are hard, she found in them occasionally a little seed of moral training, which she loved to drop into her child's mind. These poor mothers! what harvests from such seed are garnered in rich sheaves by the angels of these little ones! This day the mother said: "Mary, it was Mr. X. gave us this breakfast; won't you pray

for him?" "Yes, mother, but I know what else I'll do. *When I go to heaven, I'll tell God that he gave me my breakfast.*" And that promise shall be surely kept.

I think if you began to invest little sums in this direction, you would be abundantly repaid by the realisation for your own self of this truth about money, with which I conclude my paper—that there is no use that can be made of money so certain to procure the same amount of pleasure and profit, as the use that is made by giving it away to those that want it.

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## VI.—SEEDLINGS.

YOU ask—or do I only dream you ask?—  
For wine and bread to feed the souls that thirst  
And hunger for the food that feeds a soul.  
I give you what I can, not all I would.  
I bring you corn, and some green shoots of vine,  
These shoots bear yet no clusters, and the corn  
Is corn, not bread—mere vine shoots and seed corn  
“But will they grow?”—I know not; this I know,  
They grew for me in soul-soil where hot showers  
Of tears struck often to the buried roots  
Bringing their prophecies of bloom to be.  
Such show'rs fell often, and tho' sometimes came  
The sunny gleams of transient smiles that play  
Round singer's lips,—yet, if the fruitful life  
Dwells still in any seedling, if the vines

Fold in them prophecy of vintage time,  
To tears they owe it rather than to smiles.  
Joy sits at a full table eating bread,  
Which, being eaten, is not : sorrow ploughs  
And sows the furrows of the days that are  
Unto the harvest of the times to be  
To feed men's souls ; for, it was writ of old,  
" Not by the bread of wheat alone man lives,  
But by the words that fall from God's own mouth,  
Or utter'd in the thunder, or writ down  
In Holy Books, or whisper'd to rare hearts  
That are, thereafter, bound as by a spell,  
To shape their passionate lives in moulds of song.

" The time is out of joint"—all times were so  
To those who strained them through a silent heart ;  
Who, lifted in a meditative mood,  
Above the outer ledge of fleeting time,  
Look'd forth into the Eternity beyond.  
The prophet saw the land made desolate  
Because such hearts were rare ; but only he,  
The thoughtful, saw ; the thoughtless did not see,  
They see not now—nor hear how many a voice  
Cries loudly that these times are out of joint.

'Tis not for lack of prophets self-endow'd  
With gifts prophetic for an age in need ;  
'Tis not for lack of healers, lad'n with drugs  
To stimulate or soothe a poor sick world ;  
'Tis not for lack of teachers with glib tongues,  
Each with a Gospel in his open mouth.

Comes some one saying, " Only give them bread,"



As if by bread alone these millions live  
The life without which others were brute's life.  
"Give bread!"—ay, give them bread, the very swine  
Have vested rights in acorns; nay, the oaks,  
That drank the potent wine of centuries' suns,  
That hoard the beauty of dead days that were,  
Seem to the swine but made to grow them food.  
But men are not as swine, our Mother Earth  
That gives them bread, and that will give them graves,  
Has other ends than giving bread and graves.

Another comes proclaiming, "Earth is mine"—  
(Ah! well I know the voice, 'tis Science speaks)—  
Earth used to be the Lord's, but all has chang'd,  
The earth has found new task-masters, and groans  
Beneath the rule of a relentless Law  
That neither has, nor needs a Lawgiver.  
They pluck his footstool from the feet of God  
And make of it a pulpit whence to preach  
To sorrow-stricken men a godless earth.  
In vain the rich grass bursts from under ground,  
In vain the corn fields clothe the land with gold,  
And use, with beauty knit, in golden bond,  
Gives bread to mouths, and joy to hearts of men.  
In vain, O Nature! does your murmurous song  
Wake deeper music in the hearts that love  
To listen to the echoes from afar,  
These murmurous voices wake in child-like hearts.  
Earth feels the chain of Science, her bound limbs  
Are bared for torture that shall seek her life  
Thro' every nerve, until, when life has flown,  
Not finding life, they swear she never liv'd.  
What help has Science, when it treats the earth



As if the earth, its mother, were a corpse  
On which to practise its anatomy?  
And when the task is done, commit the bones  
To charnel houses of huge soulless tomes,  
And dream that it has cag'd the spirit of life.

Pull up the flow'r that drinks its radiant life  
As well from the far depths of azure skies  
As from the clay that clings about its root;  
Pluck it, altho' its roots should drip with blood  
And tho' it groan, like mandrake, being pluck'd—  
Subject it to analysis, let your light,  
Your farthing rushlight, blaze upon its leaves,  
And burn its life out; let your microscope  
So search it that its beauty shrink, asham'd.  
You have your Science—call it botany.  
But where's the bloom that many a mid-day sun,  
And many a show'r of morning's diamond dew  
Stamp'd on it?—where the grace, beyond all words,  
Beyond all science, which the childlike eye  
Saw in its petals, till the flowers became  
No longer common things with earth-fed roots,  
But hieroglyphics writ by God's own hand  
Profusely on the face of the broad world;  
Their meaning not so hid but childlike hearts  
Can read it, till the hands that touch a flow'r  
Thrill as they touch'd the hand itself of God.

Shall Science help? You draw the lightning down  
And make it breathe a soul through the dead wire.  
What boots it if the soul it breathe be dead  
And rotten, if it flash the news of wars,  
And deeds that make the thronèd angels weep?  
What if God's lightning, master'd by the hands

Of men not godlike, lend itself to lies,  
And frauds, and make the world it found not good,  
Less good for those who wait our vacant chairs?

Rise other, nobler cries than cries of bread,  
And men who scan the "masses" from the height  
Of some imagin'd eminence, where they sit,  
And worship "culture" on such lonely heights,  
So far remov'd from common sympathies  
That nought can live there, save the brute and God;  
Brute that knows nothing—God, who sees the whole  
Of life's full mystery;—men of mould like this  
Join us in crying—not by bread alone,  
"Nay, not by bread and science can man live."  
If not by these, by what?—

"By liberty,  
Free thought, free speech, free bodies, and free souls."  
But, is thought free, that thinks what is not, is?  
Is thought enslav'd when steadied by the grasp  
Of Truth? Is speech made free when free to lie?  
Are bodies free subjecting to their laws  
The higher needs of far more ultimate laws?  
Are souls made free by Error?

Here's a scheme—  
"The eye wakes envy, envy wakes desire,  
The new-born wish brings its own right to be,  
Which waits but power to have the further right  
To clothe itself in act before the world."  
Nay, here's no Gospel—better be a brute  
With grovelling instincts true to instinct's laws,  
With natural aims, however low, fulfilled,  
Than be a man whose many-chamber'd brain  
Has found no tenant save a scheme like this.

Thro' odorous flow'rs, and trees in the first sheen  
Of their first suit of leaves, in Paradise,  
An ominous whisper rustled to the ears  
Of Eve and Adam, and the thought of God  
That lay like imag'd heaven across a lake,  
Upon their placid souls, was broken and marred  
By that faint whisper—"Liberty or death,"  
Or was it rather—"Liberty *and* death?"

God's noblest gift to man is Liberty,  
The abstract power to choose or right or wrong.  
But abstract pow'rs have concrete exercise,  
And, in its concrete action, liberty  
Is worse than worthless when it chooses wrong.

"These be your gods, O Israel!"--will such help  
When the day wanes, and the black night comes down,  
When men, struck to the heart, creep from the press  
Of life's fierce strife, to cool their wounds and die?  
Nay, will they help when heart and hand are strong  
To do and dare?

Such hinder work, not help,  
By clipping wings on which the soul might fly  
Beyond the sun and silver stars, to God,  
And thence returning find the selfsame God  
Beneath the petals of a wayside flow'r,  
Awaiting to be spoken with, and speak.  
Find Him till surelier in the smiles of babes,  
Like what He deigned to be; and in the grace  
Of mothers, like his Mother that once was—  
And sureliest in the men whose bearded lips

Are pain-drawn with the sorrows which the world  
Has sent them, but which, howsoever great,  
Are but as scatter'd drops upon the rim  
Of the full cup the olives saw Him drain.  
Ay, here's help and the Helper.

I have pass'd  
Where Italy's beauty sings its psalms to heav'ns  
Sown thick with tremulous stars that also sing,  
And every mile there came a wayside shrine,  
Built by hands hard, but moved by hearts not hard.  
Each held its thought. In one the Infant smil'd  
In Mary's face, whose own face caught a glow  
As from the flush of some undreamed-of dawn.  
—Let those pause here, who in secluded homes  
Are sheltered from the storms that vex men's hearts,  
Who pray, toil, live in hope, and die in peace—  
Another bore the white face of the Christ,  
As gathering up into his broken Heart  
All pains that ever swept the quivering strings  
Of human hearts, all sorrows that have been  
Or shall be till the doomsday brings an end.  
HERE is his place, full in whose open ear  
Discordant voices of distracted times  
Strike the full stroke that seems to shatter hope.

What hope is for the myriad men who sit  
In darkness worse than death, who toil and die—  
Toil without profit, die without a hope?  
Whose narrow life is clos'd within a round  
Of ends as narrow as the ends of beasts?  
Only this hope—life brings them suffering  
Which God so loved, so loves, shall always love,  
That where that is, God never is far off.

Whose world is godless, always sits discrown'd  
And in relentless hunger for some food,  
Which yet he knows not, eats his own sad heart.  
Hard is the road, and white with blending dust—  
What tho' it wind thro' fields of shadowy corn,  
And by the slopes where vine rows woo the sun,  
He only feels the hardness 'neath his feet,  
And the hot beat of pain upon his heart.  
Then the night comes—mayhap, his weary feet  
Have led him weary to the wayside shrine;  
Fain would he pass, but suffering holds him there,  
And sorrow's hand has bow'd him to the dust.  
He fain must sit, and scan the face of Christ,  
And wondering, finds a likeness in that face  
To what his own, not is, but might become  
If to the sorrow that has scarr'd his face  
Were added some strange charm in Christ's white face  
That makes His sorrow strangely like some joy  
For which no tongue of earth can find a name.

He has become a child in sorrow's school,  
Where Christ is teacher—in the dust he sits  
Discrown'd and desolate, for his schemes have fail'd  
But lo! Heaven opens, and an angel flies,  
Borne back upon the prayer he flung to God,  
While yet he had not known God, or God's ways,  
And takes the thorn crown from the brow of Christ,  
And bends it round the forehead of the man.  
Each thorn-point stings like fire, till his whole soul  
Is steep'd in pain—but lo! he wears a crown,  
'Tis only thorns as yet—has God no gems  
To set among those thorns?—

The angel comes



Bearing a gem that leaves a path of light  
From God's bright throne down to the cold, dark earth.  
The crown, else gemless, bears the gem of Faith,  
But faith and suffering will not dwell alone ;  
"I suffer, and God is," were incomplete  
Till subtle dialectic of the heart  
Suggests that since these things are, hope must be :  
Then, by the gem, else lonely, in the crown,  
The angel sets the starlike gem of Hope.  
"I suffer, and God is, I hope in God !"  
But who would let his formula rest here,  
When sitting at the feet of a dead Christ ?  
Once more the angel comes—this time the gem  
He bears, sets, passing, earth and heaven ablaze  
With gleams that mingle hues of blood and fire.  
"Justice and peace have kiss'd"—earth into heaven  
Has pass'd before its time ; the way-worn man  
Feels the years' burden drop from off his soul ;  
His woes have chang'd to memories of a past,  
That was, but that shall never be again,  
That even in its darkest, dreariest time,  
Was but as some dark cloud across the sky,  
That hid the heavens, but pass'd, and being pass'd,  
The heavens seem bluer than they else had been.  
He sat in sorrow's school at Christ's pierc'd feet,  
Has learnt his lesson, has become a child :  
Sits now—above the storms that vex the world—  
A happy child at his great Father's feet,  
Whose food it is to do his Father's will,  
Whose soul is fed by words from God's own mouth,  
Whose loftiest science is the hope he holds,  
Whose dream of liberty is leave to love.



## VII.--ABOUT THE COMMONPLACE.

THERE was a time when my idea of a monarch was inseparable from the idea of his crown, sceptre, and robe of state. If in those days I had drawn anything like a complete picture of the daily life of royalty, which, indeed, it never occurred to me to do, I make no doubt but the crown would have played as large a part as the head on which it was fitted. Worn—so it would have seemed in my picture—in the pomp of ceremony, but none the less certainly in the retirement of domestic privacy; for I should never have been able to imagine a motive cogent enough to make him put it away voluntarily; and had it been put away against his will he would have been, for me, no longer a king. Possibly I might have allowed it to be laid aside at night, as likely to make but an uncomfortable nightcap; out, even then, only put away at the very last moment, when the curtains were securely drawn against prying eyes; so deposited, too, as to be within easy reach should any monarchical business turn up during the night; and, in any event, ready to be assumed incontinently at the first gleam of the new to-morrow.

It was a child's first introduction to that part of the experience of his race which robs the commonplace of its natural impressiveness, and invests the novel and the peculiar with a sacredness and a significance that just last till they, too, become commonplace. With most people not only does the "*ignotum*" stand "PRO

*magnifico*," but it is regarded as "*the magnificum*" itself and in itself.

The thing we know well is commonplace ; so much is, perhaps, inevitable. But, being commonplace, it is apt to seem unlovely, which is not inevitable ; nay, which is so little necessary that any scientifically arranged "treatise upon the commonplace" would touch upon nearly all the things that men have unanimously declared to be beautiful. Such a treatise, you may well believe, I am *not* going to write. But I shall try to say something about the matter which may be to the purpose of some future professor more scientifically-minded than myself, who may be induced to essay that comprehensive subject.

How the unknown haunts us at times, trailing on the far verge of the horizon skirts of dazzling brightness. How, all unknown though it be, it seems to take witching form, with beckoning finger and beseeching eyes luring us away from the dull monotony of things familiar. I lift to my lips the cup which the beneficent genius of the commonplace mixes for my daily refreshment ; and, lo ! even as I lift it, I feel the thrill of an invisible presence borne, as it were, upon the almost inaudible whisper of some longing, to which, perhaps, some poet has fitted words that almost express it. A shadowy arm is uplifted, and from a magic vial a drop is poured, and then the cup is tasteless ; and, as I drain it, visions of bright, impossible things seem to lurk in depths my lips can never reach.

Do you remember that immortal Prodigal who walks from the page of the Evangelist into the hearts of every successive generation ? I seem to myself to have found out things about him which the Gospel does not expressly

state. I am inclined to think that his childhood was one of more than ordinary promise, and that the servants and people at home loved him far more than they loved that elder brother in whose character prudence, probably, encroached on some of the space that might have been profitably devoted to generosity. I should imagine he was one who loved to make those about him happy—a thing which men of (what they themselves deem) sublimer type not rarely either forget or despise. All this, however, was in the days when he was a boy, and blameless. But youth came, bearing into his blood the fullest breath of its fullest spring, and bringing with it that haunting vision of the unknown and the untried.

It is a sad story, or rather it would be a sad story; were it not that, in the Gospel, it ends so unlike the way a story constructed out of the same materials would end in the telling of a modern philosophico-poetico-romancist.

Something came upon him that made life seem irksome. Nay, not then does it seem to me to have come for the first time. I imagine there had been touches of it even on his childhood. I imagine there had been times when the ball hopped not as of old, and the marbles seemed to spin from the childish fingers not so lightly as they used; that then other toys were taken up, and the pleasure that was in them squeezed out quickly. Surely there was something better in the world than these simple contrivances for making childhood gay, and boyhood happy. Poor fellow, he grew weary of the unfailing plenty and uneventful serenity of his father's house. He felt the young blood stirring in his veins, and dreams of larger license, which he called "liberty," rising in his heart. He longed to break away

from what his fatal inexperience deemed the dull monotony of home. I have always, somehow, fancied that his home was situated in a fair valley, bounded by a circle of not very distant hills; and that his eyes got the habit of turning often to their summits; and that a wild dream haunted him of a world beyond the mountains fairer and more beautiful than any in which his feet had walked while they trod the quiet ways of home.

He thought, you may be sure, that he could find in that fairy land a field for such talents as were his; a place where the prizes of life would come to him; where, above all, he would have his own way, and be his own master. Did he think, too,—nay, did he *not* think?—that he would find friends more faithful, hearts more true, affection more tender and more enduring than he had ever found at home. How do I guess these things? Ah, my friends, there is one thing that does not change—the heart of a boy or of a man. Take the first bright-eyed, promising boy that comes in your way, in whose character boyhood and youth are just meeting, and, if you have the art (but it is a rare one) of making him show his heart and its nestling brood of callow wishes and half-fledged hopes, you will discover the inspiration of my studies upon the Prodigal.

However, at last, thinking his wayward thoughts, his heart swelled into the ingratitude of rebellion. He demanded his portion and went his way with a joy whose conscious guilt endowed it with an anticipated touch of the remorse that was so sure to come. What he found we know. We have all of us, more or less, trodden those paths that trend across the distant hills that seem at first to lead us up where we can touch the very heavens, and make playthings of the silent moon and silver

stars. Only at first; for, when the heights are gained, the path tends ever downward, broadening as it goes.

Across those hills there are many paths. Let each one follow the foolish wayfarer by that which his own idiosyncrasy points out as the most likely way.

He had, at all events, emancipated himself from the commonplace. I may well suppose he found a world very different from what his foolish fancy painted on the unlimited sunlit canvass which inexperience supplies—professing to supply it gratis, but in reality taking bond for costly after-payment to be rigorously enforced. Friends! Yes, there were friends; for by his girdle still hung the unexhausted purse. They were of the sort called “summer friends.” He thought them fine fellows, whose smiles were worth gold. And with gold he bought their smiles—smiles that were so bright that they needed to be dipped in wine-cups to cool their glow—smiles of such protean capabilities that, when not on paid duty, they most easily assumed the undress of a sneer.

He met, you may take for granted, no love like that he had so lightly spurned, no heart like the father’s he had wounded so cruelly, with that thoughtless cruelty whose very unconsciousness is its most bitter ingredient, in which youth is sometimes such an adept. And then in a land far off, poverty came upon him. The summer friends fell, one by one, away, and he felt the sickness and the sinking of the heart that are the costly cures of the heart’s delusions. At last, in the meanest of menial employments, he sate among the swine, staying his body’s hunger with the acorn husks, but finding in the bitterer husks of memory and regret nothing that could appease for a moment the hunger of his heart.



I don't know why I have so fully (and yet not half so fully as my heart would prompt me) written out his story. He occurred to me at first as the most eminent instance on record of extreme disgust with the commonplace. Moreover, there is some of him in most hearts that are worth anything. May they all, like him, come home at last!

*He* came home—home to the commonplace. Have you ever pictured to yourself that unwritten and unrecorded after-life of his? Be sure the past came back to him at times, not only as a painful experience, but came back with a glow and a glamour that memory can fling over things past, let hard-won experience preach never so wisely. I wonder was he ever tempted—say, when the prudent elder brother put on the half self-complacent, half-scornful look of a man who, never having known temptation, had escaped a fall—I wonder was the Prodigal tempted, at such times, to try the hillside paths once more. Had he a mother skilful to detect the gathering gloom of such a mood, and dispel it timely, as mothers well know how? There is one thing for which I deem him enviable. He had (what few men do) bought enough experience at a less price than his whole lifetime.

We, *mes frères*, are “the heirs of all the ages;” especially are we the heirs of our own dead past. But with the inheritance does not necessarily come the secret of spending it wisely. That secret is late in coming; and just when it seems to begin to dawn upon us, we, too, have to make our wills and die. The wisdom that comes of experience is always somewhat melancholy. There is no wisdom like it—scarcely any that can be its substitute; but it has one drawback—it comes too late.



We pay for it the most precious, nay, the only precious thing we have—our years ; and then, when the purchase is completed, we find that the price we have paid away was the one thing necessary to make our bargain profitable. Graceful is that wisdom as the ivy and the moss that time accumulates upon some lordly castle ; but, like the ivy and the moss, its grace, when at its highest, adorns only a ruin. Ah ! it comes too late—when the brain has got cool, the hair has grown white ; when the thought has been moulded by prudence, the eye has grown dim, and the hand weak. Youth is the season of possibility without power, age the season of power without possibility. In youth we could do if we knew how, in age we know how if we could only do. Life seems to be a fire, and when its fierceness dies down, if we find the pure gold of wisdom, we find it beneath the gray ashes of baffled aims and blighted hopes.

There is an art, the practice of which is essential, in some degree, to anything like happiness we can hope for on this side heaven. It is the art of making the best of our belongings. I mention it here because it is an art that very remarkably strengthens our appreciation of the beauty that lurks behind the somewhat sad-coloured veil of the commonplace. Just set yourself to reckon up your possessions, physical and mental, and you will soon see what priceless wealth you have, perhaps, been overlooking : in fact, which you have been literally *looking over* ; straining, in most uncomfortable tip-toe posture, to catch a glimpse of something just ahead of you, for a certainty, is not half so valuable. And, let me tell you, *that something* is always *just ahead*—shall always be, till you run it to earth, and sink exhausted beneath the "*hic jacet*."

What, let me ask you, are the most useful things? Are they not the things that are so common that you would forget to enter them in any inventory of your possessions. Air, and light, and water, cost nothing—that is, they cost *you* nothing—in truth, they cost the creative-power of God; and yet, these are precisely the things that are too priceless to fall under any money standard. Again, what are the most beautiful things? Ask the poets. What do they almost seem to rave about? Stars, and sunshine, and flowers, glows of summer sunset, gloom of midnight seas, hush of noontide, crash of storm, and hearts, and homes, and human passion, and children, and men, and women—and all these common things that *we* touch so closely and so often that we have ceased to see the unutterable loveliness that is in every one of them.

To be sure it needs some training to see and appreciate their beauty. And the training must be more or less unconscious. It is said that almost any posture of the human body unconsciously assumed and maintained is nearly always graceful. But this piece of information, I solemnly warn you, is absolutely unavailable in the impossible task of consciously assuming an unconscious attitude. It is so with the training needed for seeing the beauty of common things. As a matter of fact, it won't do to "get up" the sunrise in your favourite poet, and then get up yourself and rush out, once in a way, in the raw morning, to be enchanted as per previous arrangement. Better stay in bed, indeed, so far as æsthetic purposes are concerned.

You observe I used the phrase above—"in the raw morning." I did so because it serves to introduce something I want to tell you about sunrise—(you see I

freely admit my "one in a thousand" reader into my workshop). My theory about sunrise is, that the winter sunrise is far the most beautiful, or rather, perhaps, I should say, not the most beautiful, but the one whose beauty being least mixed up with the beauty of other things, gets the best chance of forcibly expressing itself. *Experto crede*, for, on most winter mornings, my business brings me (not unfrequently, I confess, against the grain) in a direction facing the yet unrisen sun. You whose notions of sunrise are, perhaps, almost exclusively derived from the poets (whose own notions, I shrewdly suspect, were mostly developed under the spell of midnight), you would perhaps be inclined to anticipate that one sunrise would be very like another. But, believe me, it is not so. If you closely scan the faces of the next ten persons you meet (ten will serve the purpose of the present experiment, but you can take ten thousand if you please), and after remarking (what is most obvious) how unlike they are to each other, just consider within how infinitesimally narrow a limit Nature, working not only with like materials, but with the same combinations of material, yet contrives to effect the unlikeness, or better call it, long though the word be—the distinguishableness—you will be prepared to believe me when I say that one sunrise is scarcely ever an exact copy of any other. The general outlines are, to be sure, the same; but cloud tints, and, let me add, mind moods, are infinite in variety, and without being specially an egotist, you will find something of yourself in every sunrise you gaze upon. Here is one out of many, specially described for the benefit of the man who, not being an idiot, or born blind, or utterly insensible to everything but £ s. d., has the strength of mind

to confess that he never, to his knowledge, witnessed the full spectacle of a sunrise. Beauty of sunrise, in description, is, as a rule, not so much beauty of sunrise as beauty of words, often expressing things which only the describer ever saw in any sky. And, indeed, the words are often beautiful enough—*vide* Shakspeare, Milton, Tennyson, *passim*. But about my own description. Well, the truth is, the three names I have mentioned have suggested to my memory so many fine things about sunrise, that I hereby remand my own description for further consideration.

The essential elements that underlie all the great works that have ever been done or written are as commonplace as you please, if you choose mentally to decompose the structure. You have seen (*I* certainly have) some world's wonder of an edifice—such a one as becomes magnetic in its power of drawing from the four winds of heaven idle people to measure their littleness with its immensity. Well, it sprang in its completeness from the brain of some great architect. There was a day, or more probably a night, when he sate silent and alone gathering up the tangled threads that art had flung upon his life, piecing together the various fragments of various knowledge, and trying to set to consecutive music the fragmentary memories of many a dead emotion. He, as it were, focussed his whole artistic being on the problem before him. He put forth his whole artistic strength to wrestle with the art-angel that had come to him in such a dream as genius sends to her rarest sons; and when this was done, then precisely, neither sooner nor later, the whole edifice sprang into existence. But *we* could not have seen it then. To place it before our eyes the artist had to have recourse

to things so commonplace as stone and mortar, and the rough labour of hard hands. Nay, even of its purely artistic beauty, the essential elements had been already so scattered upon the field of nature, that there were men, not artists, looking at them every day and calling them commonplace. He only put the common elements of beauty into new combinations—nor even these so new if all were known. Had he not so used the commonplace he either could never have thought his thought, or it would have died within him unspoken and unknown.

Have you ever happened to see a fairy palace in which commonplace materials were *not* used? I have. It was in Rome, on a certain night of the *girandole*. On a background of blue-black sky rose suddenly a palace of light and fire, so suddenly that Aladdin's palace leaped at once from the large but mere possibilities of a child's dream to a living reality. But it faded, and even before it faded, your admiration of it was tempered by the knowledge that it must fade. It had no hold in the commonplace. Do you know, I often think of it when reading certain books that sparkle like fireworks for a time.

In all the world of art the same rule holds good. If you examine the poems that have lived, you will find that the ideas on which they are based, by which they live, are essentially commonplace. You will cease to wonder at that if you only reflect that there is after all nothing so common as man, so commonplace as human emotions and human hearts.

Almost all the pathos of the great masters of the lyre, and the pencil, and the chisel, has gathered itself around the very common act of dying. Death has been doing his work, and on a scale absolutely gigantic, for many



thousands of years, and yet his blow scarcely ever seems to lose the fascination of novelty. Death is the one circumstance that can never be said to be uncongenial to any human being, and yet it is the one around which genius has always chosen to lavish its wonder and its awe. They say that Domenichino's picture of the death of St. Jerome is one of the finest pictures in the world; some say the very finest, finer and nobler than even the Transfiguration that faces it in the Vatican. You will find a constant crowd drinking in the immortal agony of Laocoon; and if ever marble told a story that men never tire of hearing, it tells one in the Capitol where the Gladiator has been dying for so many pitying generations. I suppose the great reason is that all men feel that to die is the most momentous, and to die grandly the most heroic act a man can perform. Beside, to die is an act that every man *must* perform one day or other, and hence it is a bond of sympathy where almost all others are wanting between men of the most different types; and through this common bond the feelings are most powerfully appealed to.

But you will find this pathos running down through all the minor notes of human life. We all, in some sense, and in a sense that gives most of their keenest pathos to stories of men, die more than once. I have a very vivid recollection of my childhood, and my boyhood, and early youth; but I ask myself, somewhat sadly, where is that child, that boy, that youth? Each of them is dead as Julius Cæsar. I don't want to quarrel with the metaphysicians. I admit fully and freely the orthodox doctrine about identity, but a great deal of me is gone, has died, and only comes back in memories that are as pale and as pathetic as ghosts. You

that were young and now are old, I ask you has not a great deal died out of your life? Many things you cling to, heart and brain, as the most precious things in the world, time has touched with fateful finger, and revealed them the illusions that they were. In youth life was a glorious poem, but time, and fate, and circumstance, have re-written it since, and now it is the baldest prose. You have, doubtless, formed your schoolboy and your college friendships, have poured your hopes, your dreams, your ambitions into the ear of some fellow-student. But has it ever happened to you to meet your early friend when the world had "wreaked" some of its years and their troubles on him and you? If so, did you not find the meeting somewhat doleful? You shook hands warmly, to be sure, and a flash of memory came across you both. But it was only a flash; and as the lightning-flash sometimes reveals a ruin, so *it* served to show the havoc time had made in the edifice of youthful friendship. You talked perhaps about your school-days, and your college terms; wondered had "John succeeded as he promised," "was Tom the same merry fellow as of old." You strove, in short, to put life into the past that was dead so long, and you only succeeded in galvanising it—and, like any galvanised body, it looked ghastly. Finally, you came to the sad conclusion that your old friend was dead, and if you examined closely, that you, his old friend, were dead too. Again, you did many generous, noble, unselfish, unutterably foolish things in those old times. When you think of those heroic moods now, does not an almost blush mantle your somewhat faded cheek, if indeed you have retained at all the power of blushing to even the smallest extent that can warrant the name? Doubtless, you

have become wise now, and have by heart your long practised homily against "cakes and ale."

Or you have written something in those hot days which you very naturally considered a masterpiece. Somehow it was stowed away and comes to light after all those years. You come upon it some day, and it startles you as if it were a ghost, and something has died either out of it or out of you. So bits of us die, and are buried, and rise no more. It is only when the final death is past, and over that all those seemingly inconsistent moods of man's various ages shall be blended into harmony under the white, pure light of the sunshine of heaven.

But it is time to end, and I feel someway that the last sentence would have made an impressive ending. This, however, with which I conclude, will make, perhaps, a more useful one. If any young man has been reading this essay, as I hope there may have been more than one, in whose heart and brain the sounds of nature seem always ringing into rhymes, let him take this piece of information as a thank-offering for any momentary sympathy he may have bestowed on me and my thoughts. The difference between a true poet and a mere would-be (but can't be) poet seems to be precisely this : The latter goes, so to speak, botanising with his nose in the air, and his eyes fixed on some patch of colour on a distant mountain ; a patch which, even if he ever reach, he will find to be but faded grass or worthless weeds. The true poet paces quietly, his eyes lifted often to heaven for guidance, but mostly bent in all humility upon the earth, which is God's footstool. And he carefully and with tender reverence gathers up the wayside flowers on which the other trampled in his vain folly, and weaves them into garlands that shall never fade.

## VIII.—ABOUT CONVERSATION.

CONVERSATION, in any worthy sense of the word, is the rarest thing in the world ; and people who can judge say that it is becoming rarer every day. People can talk and do talk, perhaps more than enough, but few can now-a-days be said to converse. People gossip and enjoy gossip, but these are perhaps the last people in the world who could be convinced of what is nevertheless a fact, that gossip is not conversation. How many people do you know who say those wise, and witty, and pathetic, and humorous things that fasten on the memory and cultivate the mind? Why it should be so is hard to say. Conversation is amongst the oldest of human arts. Perhaps it is over practice that has made facility degenerate into carelessness. However, there are some reasons on the very surface of the subject. To begin with—people are afraid of each other. There is scarcely anyone in whose company one gives his mind full swing and his tongue free exercise. It is strange what positive awe people seem to have of each other. They are so near and yet so far. They look into each other's eyes, and yet their mutual estimate of the thought that lies far behind the eye is based upon the merest guess-work. They can never be quite sure what it is lurks there—and they walk if not with fear, at any rate with caution. Besides, they are afraid of the topics they handle. Under the most commonplace and decorous topic they are afraid of some lurking devil that will leap out and throttle the proprieties and the conventionalities.

They handle topics gently, as if afraid of hurting them, *or*, it may not impossibly be, afraid of hurting their own hands. They don't squeeze them; and it is only when a topic is squeezed that it gives out its fullest flavour, and its subtlest essence.

I don't think it would be quite judicious to set one's self expressly to cultivate conversation as an art. Perhaps it would be better manage so as to have something worth saying, and in the process of contriving *that* the art of saying it well might possibly be attained unconsciously. Cultivation of the *how* to say a thing is apt to result in epigram which may be as sparkling, but may also be as useless and as dangerous as a firework. Take my advice, dear reader, don't talk epigrams even if you have the gift. I know, to those who have, the temptation is almost irresistible. But resist it. Epigram and truth are rarely commensurate. Truth has to be somewhat chiselled, as it were, before it will quite fit into an epigram. The corners have to be chipped off, the rough edges made smooth, the surface polished.

If you have the right of entry, as indeed every man has, more or less, into the great quarries of truth, and if you are able to hew or blast a few boulders from the mass, you will find that they are rarely apt to tumble out in the shape of bricks—smooth, square, regular.

Don't be at too much pains to chisel your rough truths. But, then, neither carry them about, as some people do, in your hand, ready to fling them like stones at the first person you meet. If you happen to have attached to you one of those tormentors known as "candid friends," you will understand what I mean. The "piece of his mind," such a one flings at you, has usually very jagged edges, and makes a very ugly cut.



Here is a story of a "candid friend." An old man whom I know, happened to fall into a very delicate state of health, and he was of such an age as to make such delicacy symptomatic of danger. A much younger friend, young enough to think that old people who had, in his opinion, lived their lives, ought to be quite satisfied, if not even anxious, to seek a better world, asked the old man how he did. He replied somewhat despondingly, whereupon the young man clapped him on the back, and said: "Cheer up, man, why you'll live these six months." If the old man loved that neighbour as himself, don't you think that his self-love at that moment was inappreciable?

If you meet a good talker, one of those rare talkers, such as we sometimes find a hint of in books, but seldom or never meet anywhere else—if you meet such a one ask him who was the best talker *he* ever met. You may put down the individual he names not necessarily as a good talker, but as a rarely gifted listener. Now I think good listening connotes a better moral, and perhaps a better intellectual nature than the best talking. Without good listening good talking is an impossibility, and perhaps in a conversational point of view, the vice of the age is not so much incapacity for talking well, as indisposition to listening patiently.

There are people, and not a few, who have their minds made up on everything. To be sure, you will commonly find their minds of such sort that the making up cannot be an extensive or a laborious process. These so hit you with their opinions that each feels like an insult. They talk about men and things as if they had the ground-plan of human society in their pocket-books. They usually carry a two-inch rule (be the same more

or less), and they are continually pulling it out on the mention of any great name or great deed—sometimes with most ludicrous result. What chance would the most eminent of table-talkers have with such men as these.

Indeed, to have your mind quite made up (upon anything for which you had not infallible authority) and unnecessarily to obtrude your incapacity of opposite conviction, is a *quasi* insult to the person with whom you converse; as if *he*, at any rate, had nothing to offer that could change your opinion.

We don't commonly resort to conversation so much for information as for amusement. Very few people want argument, though there are pugnacious spirits who seem to scent the battle from afar, and will lie in wait for some statement of yours that, thinking of no danger, saunters peaceably into the conversation, and will pounce on it, and force it to defend itself.

If you go in for argument take care of your temper. Your logic, if you have any, will take care of itself.

Some men strike into conversation, as if it were an American "free fight," and proceed to pummel some one. Nor do they much care whom they strike. "Here goes," said the Irishman, who couldn't resist the temptation of a fight on which he chanced, "here goes, and God send I may take the right side."

The best thing, as it seems to me, you can bring with you into conversation is what I will call *easiness* of mind. We all know what the cognate bodily attitude is, and we know, too, that it is the last result of good breeding and fine culture. It can't be simulated. The forgers of it have never succeeded in getting the right die. If I find a man in conversation uneasy, over bashful, pretentious, over prompt to show the extent of his

knowledge, and, without meaning it, attracting more attention to its limits, I say that man is not, so to speak, mentally a gentleman.

A man who parades his knowledge in conversation reminds me of one of those *nouveaux riches* who are so fond of showing people over their houses and grounds. They are careful to tell you the price of everything you see, and if you admire anything it is nothing to what they can show you afterwards. They lay traps for the envy they suspect in you, and arrange their surprises as if with the design of inflicting so many moral shocks upon your self-esteem. The truth is, they have not had their wealth long enough to feel quite at ease in the possession of it. They are, to be sure, richly gilded; but if you apply to them the Horatian "thumb nail," you will find the baser metal underneath. And the metal is usually *brass*.

Don't keep jingling in the course of your conversation any intellectual money you happen to have. Men of real capital seldom carry much money about in their pockets, but when they draw a cheque it is honoured at sight. If you jingle your money, and pull it out, and count it ostentatiously, you prove, to be sure, that you have that much (if, indeed, you be not in debt), but you prove also that you hardly have any more. Besides, what positive contempt a *millionaire* must feel for the man who seems to say that a hundred or two is a fortune to him.

In conversation you will find your advantage in being just yourself, standing or sitting as the case may require, in your own natural dimensions; not strutting or standing on tip-toe, or on some concealed footstool, trying to achieve the impossibility of adding a cubit to

your mental stature, and succeeding at best only in deluding others into the notion that you have achieved it, which is a very different thing. Be yourself. If that self be foolish and ignorant, I do not say, be satisfied with yourself. But rather strive to remove the ignorance and foolishness than, remaining ignorant and foolish, to simulate knowledge and wisdom.

For the ignorant, thrown into whatever conversational exigencies, good sense has provided an inviolable refuge. It is silence. For the foolish the sole refuge is "a fool's paradise."

There is a piece of advice sometimes given by people who profess to teach the best method of doing every thing. It is to draw round the conversation to that special branch of human things with which the person you speak with may be supposed to be familiar. Now, if this be done with a view of acquiring varied knowledge, it strikes me as nothing less than intellectual mendicancy; indicating inability or indisposition to earn intellectual bread by honest work. If it be done through politeness, it is a gross mistake. What is it after all but a roundabout fashion of saying to a man, "I know you are a stupid ass; that in general you are not worth losing time with; but since I must converse with you, I will strive to pick your brain of the only coin it is likely to have."

A dash of egotism, if it be clever egotism, flavours conversation wonderfully. After all, it is not so much what a man thinks you want to know, as what he is. Take up a volume from the circulating library; let it be the wisest, wittiest, best, yet if you see a pencil-note on the margin, not all the wit and wisdom will detain you for a moment from devouring that scrap, which has all

the flavour of a human personality. See how the dull audience will brighten up when the speaker introduces a personal reminiscence. Do you remember how the old abbot who found his monks dozing during his pious discourse stopped short, and said: "As I was going out of the monastery gate on Thursday last"—immediately they were every man of them wide awake. You will commonly find most egotism in reserved people. And you will find, too, strange as it may seem, that no man is so communicative as a reserved man, once the ice of his reserve has been broken. The talk of such a man, unless he be essentially stupid, is usually interesting. The outpourings of such a nature are intensely subjective, and so give one a view of the internal machinery by which character and conduct are formed. On the other hand, I have never known men better able to keep their own secrets than men whom society agreed to call "thoughtless rattles."

People in general do not care half so much for abstract thoughts as for concrete statements. Hence they better like to hear the poet and the orator than the philosopher. The philosopher, they feel, gives them at best only the "raw material," which poet and orator work up into robes of crimson and gold. The philosopher acts, as it were, the part of the physician—diagnoses the case, and gives his prescription, sometimes, it must be confessed, in very unintelligible *formule*. Then the orator or the poet does the apothecary's part—finds the drugs, mixes them, and gives you your specific concrete mixture. (N.B. The orator, as a rule, is the men's apothecary; the ladies usually patronise the poet.) Possibly the highest kind of conversation would be the one in which abstract ideas bore the chief



burden. Whether it would be the pleasantest is another matter. At all events it is tolerably uncommon. If you expect men to take in, from conversation, a certain quantity of abstract ideas, and afterwards make their own concretions from them, you will be disappointed. Ordinarily, conversation itself acts as the liquid base of the mixture. Perhaps, on the highest theory, a man ought to carry away only the ingredients, and let after-circumstances as they occur furnish the basis of the concrete medicine. But it is too much to expect. You might as well ask a man to take the dry materials of a Seidlitz powder, and wash them down with a draught of water, and let them effervesce in his stomach. Better let them effervesce in a tumbler. Now conversation is an admirable tumbler for moral and intellectual effervescence.

But the conversational manners of men are very various, as various as their characters and their aims. Do you happen to know anything of the "man of management?" There is nothing upon which people are more apt to pride themselves than on their power of managing others. I speak of those who deem themselves specially called to the exercise of that fine art. We have them of all sorts—in politics, in business, in society. They are amusing enough so long as they happen not to be managing *you*. In a certain sense they are conversational experts. They set themselves, if it happens to be worth their while, to study you, and manage you. If they want something from you, which perhaps you are quite ready to give, it might be thought that the simplest, at any rate, the first thing would be to ask you for it. But, bless you! that would be too simple. The thing would not be worth having on such easy terms.

There would be no scope for finesse and fine power of management. So they elaborate a theory of character about you, and sit down before you, as if you were a fortress, and lay siege to you, and fire guns into you from masked batteries, and after puzzling you considerably, get what they want, and are happy in the delusion that they have circumvented you.

That, however, is an extreme case. But it must be confessed that the power of managing men is a very great power, and often a very useful power. One managing man will calm the discord which the collision of half a dozen blockheads is sure to occasion. A wise word here—a soft answer there—a little sop thrown to this man's pride, like a tub to a whale—a gentle stroking administered to that man's vanity—and in a few moments the man of management has everything his own way. Instance—First blockhead offers a suggestion on the matter in hand, the folly of which is apparent to every one but himself. Managing man seems struck with it—swallows it slowly as if it were too sweet a morsel to be hurriedly dispatched—digests it—then says, reflectively: "My dear sir, there is a great deal" (he never says of *what*) "in your suggestion—in fact more than meets the eye at first sight. I see you have been studying this matter far in advance of us. *You* see it in some of its remote consequences. But do you not see, for that very reason, your suggestion is *premature*? We must content ourselves to deal with the mere present, and at present do you not see——?" (Blockhead), "Well, I believe you are right. I *have* been thinking deeply on this matter." (In his own mind, or what he *calls* that.) "Monstrous clever fellow! how he *did* catch the depth of my view."

Such managing men are useful. But the talent in itself does not seem to be a very reputable one, nor is it often found in a man of very high principle. But then it is not by men of very high principle that a great deal of the world's work, and very useful work in its way, gets itself done. But these managing men are to my present purpose, inasmuch as their conversational powers are, in the direction of their special art, highly cultivated.

Some men treat your thoughts as if they were *prima facie* to be regarded as vagrants, and not allowed even the use of the free highroad of conversation until they stop and give an account of themselves. "Well, now, let us see." "That's not so clear." "I don't quite see my way to agree with you." "I am afraid that is subversive of morality," &c. &c. Well we know the *formulae*, which sound as imposing as if each were a "queen's commission" to open the assize and try our poor statements for treason or murder. When you try that method on themselves, I have remarked they don't seem to like it, although it is their own. In justice, however, to these worthy persons, I must say it is seldom they give you a chance of any such retaliation—for, as a general rule, they carefully abstain from giving utterance to any ideas that are open to the charge of being original.

I don't think a person, however able he may be to do it, is bound to question everything that passes in conversation, and subject it, I do not say to his own mental tests, but even to the appointed standards. When you go into a man's garden, you admire it, if you can. If you cannot, you commonly say nothing, only get out of it as quickly as you can. If he offer you flowers or fruit,

may, if he be so much of a fool as to offer you a rank weed or a worthless berry, you are not bound to fling them in his face, and tell him he is a fool. You can go your way and leave him there. But if the flowers and fruit he offers be real flowers and wholesome fruit, even though they be of humblest quality, do you think you would consult for your own self-respect by taking him by the collar and dragging him by main force to inspect *your* rare exotics and your hot-house grapes?

Even in countries where the passport system prevails, you are not, at every moment, asked to produce your passport. There are certain places appointed for the purpose, and certain officials. So in the matter of ideas. They most assuredly *ought* to have a passport signed by morality, and if for certain tracts, by religion as well. But ordinary conversation is not the place or the time to have these passports *viséd*. There are exceptions, to be sure. If a traveller notoriously contravene the law of the country, his passport may be demanded, under the strong suspicion that he is travelling without one. If a man in conversation notoriously contravene the laws of morality, smite him (morally) if you are able, or, as being an Irishman, I may say, whether you are able or not.

Sometimes it happens that a person likely to have great weight by position, or age, or overpowering personality, abuses his position by talking sophistry (carefully concealed perhaps even from himself) in the hearing of young impressionable people. That is a time to strike a good stroke that may have wider consequences than you dream.

Of course, in a world like ours, there must be ill-natured conversation. At all events there will be.



There are, unfortunately, men who would lay a lifelong friendship on the altar of an epigram, and prefer missing the joy of a good conscience to missing the joy of saying a clever thing at the expense of charity, religion, decency, good feeling. They are the free lances of society. But somehow no one seems to think of making bosom friends of them, and when they get broken down, as they do in time, their lot is "lone and loveless" enough.

But the worst offenders against good nature are those who begin, as it were, to tickle their victim by praise in order that he may keep quiet till they have due time to aim the poisoned lance.

Many persons, indeed, assume to themselves the office of *censores morum*. They seem to imagine themselves endowed with a sort of divine right of judging and passing sentence on the delinquencies of their neighbours. There seems quite a glow of virtuous feeling about them when they mount their improvised tribunal. They have no lictors attached to their court, but their tongues have a sting in them, and can consequently not only pass sentence, but also inflict punishment. Nevertheless some never get out of the fashion of doing their work clumsily. They fall on their victim, as it were, with fist and nails, tear, bruise, and lacerate him. It is simple pugilism, savage and unsparing. But sometimes you chance upon persons of some culture in this special line. Their tongues cut to the bone, but they cut clean. They take the "subject," manipulate him scientifically, find out the weak points and the sore places, then tie him down and take the sharp scalpel and anatomise him, and lecture upon him. Between this mode and the first mentioned there is all the differ-



ence that there is between a savage assault and a clinical lecture.

We have met them, have we not, these artists in ill-nature? Of course they are, themselves, "good, respectable" people—none of your publicans and sinners. They can murder your character and look up to heaven all the time, as if they were champions of ideal virtue, and were simply actuated by a desire for your welfare. "*Poor* So-and-so—of course you heard—No? Well he was a very good fellow, he had a great many fine qualities. *I* used to admire him greatly. But what good are gifts if a person don't use them? You heard what he did lately? No. Well, they said he used to drink, and beat his wife, but I declare I never believed half what I used to hear. In fact, if I have a weakness, it is to believe the best of everyone. But I'm afraid it was all too true. At any rate he has run away, and they say he has forged a friend's name to a bill, and carried off the cash-box from his employer's office, and made an attempt to poison his father, and knocked down his mother with a poker. I never was so sorry in my life, for really he used to have a great many good qualities, poor unfortunate fellow."

"Yes," said my "cynical friend," who had happened to come in, and to whom I had read the last passage—"yes, I know such a one. I am sorry to say she is a woman—that is, she wears petticoats, and puts up her back hair. When she begins to talk of any person, thus, '*Poor* fellow, I really feel for him,' &c., you seem, if you knew her of old, to hear the hissing of the poisoned fangs that will dart out from behind the inevitable '*but*.' Why, sir, she reminds me of a boa-constrictor slaving its victim before devouring him body and bones."

“You may put this down,” he continued, “and she may read it, and she will never recognise herself. There are some people, and not a few, who have long ago scratched off the quicksilver from the back of any moral mirrors that are likely to come in their way. I declare I think their first feeling will be one of indignant surprise when they get a glimpse of their real selves, as they shall some day.”

The power of talking well is a great gift, but, as I hinted before, the faculty of listening well is, to my mind, a still greater, certainly a less dangerous one. For my part, whenever I can get others to do the talking, I am well content to remain a listener. I feel most at ease when talking, as now, on paper. A pen in my hand is a key that seems to unlock my best thoughts, and a blank page is the most sympathetic listener I ever seem to meet. And, in truth, writing is to me a conversation between my two selves. For there are two. One the impulsive writer, thinker, speaker, always ready to tackle a mental problem and pronounce upon it off-hand. The other, the cold, sceptical, unimpassioned critic, modifying thought, writing, speech. When these two act in concert it is tolerably well. But they don't always. The latter it is that frequently tells me just too late what a fool I have been making of myself; suggesting at the same time, with a readiness that, under the circumstances, savours of mockery, how much better I might have done.

A great bane of conversation—(and I include this written conversation)—I find to be men with inconveniently good memories, and fond of displaying their endowment. I mean the men who listen (or read) attentively till, in some fanciful mood, you have playfully

given utterance to some sentiment, and then strike in—"Why it was only the other day I heard you say quite the contrary." My answer is, or would be, if that "second self" of which I gave intimation was minding his business: "I don't stereotype my opinions," "I don't set such value on them as to think them worth the pains."

In fact it is not quite fair to attempt to ascertain a man's decided opinions on grave matters that admit of difference of opinion among well-informed men, by the sole means of casual conversation, or, I add again, casual writing; no more than it would be to try to entrap a physician into a medical verdict in a like manner. I revere the memory of that wise doctor who seemed to allow himself to be led to the very verge of a decided opinion, listened gravely to the statement of the case (it was in a casual conversation, and there was no fee in question), and to the final appeal—"Now what would you do in such a case?"—promptly replied, "Well, I think I should consult a skilful physician."

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## IX.—ABOUT HAPPINESS.

THERE is a certain difference to which I would fain call my reader's attention. It is the difference between writing "on" a subject, and only "about" it. If I were writing "on" happiness, I might possibly feel myself called upon to frame at least a provisional definition,

and make that the starting point of various curves of dissertation which would from time to time return back upon their beginning. As, however, it is rather my fancy to write "about" things, and as the flights of my fancy may be as little calculable as the motions of an irregular solid, I do not see any purpose that could be served by definition except the purpose of demonstrating the enormous facility of mistake that may be connected with that process. Most people are prompt enough to appreciate the conditions under which other people ought to be happy; but the precise conditions, however appreciable as matters of desire, or as things to be sought after, never seem to get themselves placed in one's own particular case.

Perhaps there were times when it seemed to us as if we were very near to happiness; but, probably, the golden moment passed by, and has never been so near us since. The word is in common use enough; the thing itself escapes us somehow. Indeed it is so rare that one wonders on what pabulum of fact the idea has supported itself, that has so persistently clung to human thoughts and sought expression in human language.

Derivatively, happiness is the thing that "haps." And it is as good an account of it as any other, if only because it implies that no account can be given. For who has ever attained to happiness *ex proposito*? Who has ever awoke in the fresh morning, with the feeling of newness about him which morning brings to youth, and said: "Come, to-day I will be happy;" and has not found ere night came what an impassable gulf circumstances sometimes cause to yawn between a design and its fulfilment? Never say, "I'll be happy." There clings a sinister omen to the mere saying of it. But



say if you will, "Come what may, I'll be content;" and under the coarse, brown robe of contentment the vision of the goddess Happiness may, in time, reveal itself.

It has been said, "man never is, but always to be blest." But it would, perhaps, be quite as true to end the line—"but always has been blest." There is something in memory that glorifies and beautifies a very commonplace past. The memory of happiness is never painful until happiness has become an absolute impossibility. "Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things." Yes, Mr. Tennyson, it was true enough in the meridian under which Dante placed it—the second circle of the "Inferno"—but is it true for anyone above whose head the blue heaven is bending still? I confess I do not find it so. What a time it was, that far back past. What friends were in those days—what pleasant faces—what genial smiles—what hopes—what hearts! None like them now. So you think. But if you could only bring back the past as it really was it would not be half so pleasant as memory makes it. The hearts were ordinary hearts enough, and few friendships of twenty golden years ago can stand the light that falls on them from that twenty years' experience. The faces were—well, average faces, and these not always smiling. These hearts that we remember were capable of their cold fits, and had them not rarely. But memory is eclectic, and can suppress quite as much as it reproduces. Memory is something of an artist. There is nothing intrinsically delightful in a pot or a pan; and there is, perhaps, much that is intrinsically unsightly and disagreeable in the actual vision of a Dutch boor raised to the highest heaven he is capable of conceiving by his beer-can and his pipe. Yet, let these things get,



as they have got, into the eye and the mind of a Teniers, and one wonders how the most undoubted life-likeness can be the groundwork of such transfiguration as they undergo upon the canvas. And memory acts after some such fashion. It selects its details and paints a pleasant picture out of the fragments of the past. Once this picture has been painted, it is only the details with which it deals that seem to have a right to live. If that be not the past, it ought to have been. Memory, like genius, does justice to the violated ideal. And surely if genius seizes on a historical character or incident, and gives *its* version of the man or the thing, would you, or would the world, be much obliged to any dry-as-dust who would fish up from forgotten times something incompatible with the rendering of genius?

It may not impossibly be that one of the minor enjoyments of heaven will be to weave together memories of long-past scenes on earth. There would then be no regret such as memory usually brings on this side of the grave; but memory might be so exalted by the conditions of beatified existence that it would seize upon and make live over again the trifles that escape our notice in their passing, but that in reality give much of their colour and their meaning to the things of which they were circumstances.

People talk about happiness in every tense but the present. One is ready enough to say, "Such a time I was happy." Readier still to say, "But for such a thing I would be happy"—and that thing is usually the very backbone of their earthly condition. But who ever says, "I am happy"? and if in some blissful hour some rare mortal syllables the words, the happiness of which he strives to tell flies with his fleeting breath. Woe to the

impertinent mortal who violates the incognito of a visiting god. The conscious dream of happiness never came till the spell of sleep was nearly broken. When the words that strove to express his dream formed themselves upon the sleeper's lips, he was almost awake again, the vision nearly gone, the brightness fading out into the light of common day. If an angel had been there, the waking eyes caught only a glimpse of his departing pinions.

The young dream of happiness to come ; the old have memories of happiness that was ; the middle-aged very commonly are sceptical of the existence of happiness at all. Happiness in this world usually comes draped in illusion, and by the time one arrives at middle age the illusions have faded out one by one, or have been swallowed up by the monster illusion that one is free from illusion. At any rate one has not had time to discover what is in reality the fact, that all illusion covers a very solid basis of reality. Illusions are nature's beneficent gilding for bitter but necessary pills. They are the atmosphere through which we are meant to see things. Do you think, or can you say, that you have ever seen the commonest object as it is in itself ? You never have. The eye, modified itself by innumerable conditions, creates a great deal of what it sees. It makes a picture and divines the reality. So don't be too hard on illusions, whether they be the illusions that cling to "cakes and ale," or the subtler illusions that hamper the wisdom that despises them. Even if my vote had any influence I should be slow to give it for the removal of all illusion from this theatre of human actions. Even if you stickle for reality, they *are* reality as much as anything else. There they are, and have been any time these five

thousand years. Being there, they have a right to be. Suppose you want to see a real man. At what arbitrary point shall you consider his reality to begin. Divest him of his dignities and offices. Strip him of his title and his rank. Take off his robes of state, his business dress, his garment of pleasure. Can you say you have him while even a fig-leaf disguises him? Nay, why will you leave the flesh upon his bones? Do you not see how apt it is to assume varying tints of most deceptive bloom? Have it off by all means, and let him figure before you in his skeleton. But can anyone think that a man's framework of bones constitute him. The flesh and the clothes you have taken away, and the circumstances which your eager search for reality flung aside he must assume again if you would have the faintest chance of knowing him or his history. For all these things have gone to make him what he is, and shall do their part in making him whatever he may become.

There is one illusion that has much to do with most of our happiness, and still more to do with most of our unhappiness. It may be told in a word. We expect too much. One has, especially in early life—though I do not know any age at which it is completely absent—one has an exaggerated sense of one's own importance in the system of beings, and growing out of that, an exaggerated sense of the importance of one's own special interests. Nor is it usually counteracted by any keen appreciation of the fact, that others are in this respect very like ourselves, and take equally large views upon the subject of their own personality. Nature has not made any human being without a due, not to say an undue, share of self-esteem; and when my self-esteem is brought into contact with yours, it takes some

time and some temper so to adjust them to each other as that contact will not mean collision.

Indeed we expect too much. It is beautiful to witness the confiding simplicity with which an ingenuous youth will expect the world to take him at his own estimate—to be at pains to make itself acquainted with his idiosyncrasy, and being acquainted adapt itself to that. Beautiful to see how, notwithstanding liability to change of view, which might be one of the very early lessons taught by the smallest experience, a young man will calmly expect his own present feeling to be viewed in the light of a standard of conduct to his neighbour. Beautiful but for this—that the disappointment that is inevitable, instead of presenting us with the golden fruit of wisdom, often results only in the crab-apple of cynicism. The sweeter the wine, the more biting is the acid of the vinegar.

I remember once making to some extent, and striving to cultivate the acquaintance of two robins. I was anxious to be of use to them, to alleviate the hardships of the severe winter. I had ready for them a constant supply of crumbs, and, conscious of the most benevolent intentions towards them, it was my programme that they should surrender themselves completely to my views and consent to be made happy, not indeed in their own foolish, ill-considered way, but in the way which my higher intelligence would be prompt to suggest. But they did not seem to fall in with my views. They seemed indeed to have an unreasonable distrust of my ultimate intentions. They took my crumbs, but kept carefully beyond the reach of the hand that scattered them. I felt hurt. They were unreasonable—they were even ungrateful. They should have known



me better, and better divined the benevolence of my intention. A cold shadow of cynicism stole over my preconceived sentiments on the subject of robins. I began to think that they had been spoken of beyond their merits. My faith was shaken in the portion that concerned them of the legend of the "Babes in the Wood." So far as I could see they were no better than sparrows; indeed, not so good, for, if sparrows had no aureola of sentimental legend around their history, yet, their social manners, free and jerky, not to say impudent, presented many aspects with which a growing boy might naturally sympathise.

A young man goes amongst men whose theory of life is much more complicated than that of birds; and he expects to unravel the complication in a fashion somewhat analogous to that which I have been describing. He has a tolerably good opinion of himself, and that apparent benevolence which such a good opinion usually brings with it, so long as it is not disturbed by the unfriendly comments of persons or circumstances. Having that good opinion he expects others not only to have the same, which would be much to expect, but to act as if they had it, which would be to expect much more. He has the heart-hunger natural to his age, and the belief, natural too, that his neighbours exist, more or less, for the purpose of bringing about a more fitting adjustment between what he has and what he wants. Of course he finds that the world is not organised precisely according to that view. Thinking that others' desire to serve him is in direct ratio to his desire to be served, he makes investments of belief and of conduct in that theory, and he so far loses his investment as that he gains nothing but a somewhat sad experience. But do



you suppose that he need come out of the market a moral bankrupt. Do you suppose that he would be wise in entertaining scepticism as to the existence of human kindness, because it was not, as he had expected, exclusively at his service? Because the social system was not arranged according to his views, does it necessarily follow that it was badly arranged? Not at all. As a man gets wiser, he expects less, and probably gets more than he expects.

One of the Moorish caliphs of Granada was surnamed "The Happy." Things had always gone well with him in the estimation of his subjects. It is to be supposed that his health had been beyond the average good; that his friends had been faithful, his people prosperous, and his arms either eminently successful or rusty from long disuse. At any rate, men, looking back upon his life, saw it as one long track of uninterrupted brightness—of sunshine unvexed by a cloud—and they styled him "The Happy." But when he himself looked back he did not see things precisely so. His life had been a long one, he had had some rare days, but, as for happiness, by the most conscientious computation he arrived at the conclusion that he had had in his whole lifetime just three-and-twenty days of what he considered happiness. Some of my readers might possibly suppose that these twenty-three days chanced within the period of the caliph's honeymoon. But I fear there is in his history intrinsic evidence that he was never married at all; and as a matter of fact, in his reckoning, the days were not consecutive. Does it not seem a small allowance of happiness for a long lifetime? Does it not seem that his subjects lightly and with little reason gave him the title of "The Happy?" Consider the matter each one

for himself. Have you, or you, or you, a larger number of pure white days in the calendar of your happiness? For my part, I think the caliph had a just claim to his title.

Ah! the happy days are rare in most lives. There have been some, but they were few. These were days when, if one only could, he would have stopped the pendulum of time, and have life measured by the music of happy heart-beats. It only the evanescent moment would crystallise into permanence, though it may have been in reality that in the very evanescence lurked the chief part of the charm! I am inclined to think that really happy moments would not survive the shock of such crystallisation. Strange, when you look back, how difficult it is to fix upon and duly to appraise the constituent elements of any happiness you remember. It was made up of trifles so insignificant and so commonplace. So common, indeed, that, considered merely as things, you can get them together almost any day you please. Indeed, they have often been together since without resulting in anything like happiness. Some summer day like a thousand that have come and gone. Some voice which, objectively considered, even you cannot pronounce to have been the sweetest that ever made music through lips tremulous with emotion. Some common passages in human intercourse—a word, a look, a smile, a tone—that seemed to strike a hidden harmony out of all surrounding circumstance. And these things resulted in a passing mood that made the world look as if it were temporarily transfigured. It was a happy day. Never shone the sun so brightly, never ran the river with so sweet a song—never grass so green, never flowers so beautiful.

Look back at it all now. Put the pieces together and place them under the microscopic memory. Apply your subtlest tests, analyse it with what skill you may, you cannot so find the soul of that dead happiness as that you would be able to give reason good to any sensible man that you ought to have been happy.

Indeed analysis is a process very fatal to life or to anything that stands to anything else in the relation of life. The scalpel may reveal the secret of structure, it can never reach the mystery of being. The spell of life is found at the bottom of no crucible. Fatal to the life of everything that lives is that late-born of the goddesses—the goddess Analysis.

The man is still living who made me rich beyond the measure of a child's dream by the present of my first shilling. It was so much of a novelty to me at the time that I kept it by me for a day and a half. But during the one night of my possession it might have been an enchanted shilling for the wild way in which it took possession of my dreams. It was lost mysteriously, and found as if by miracle. It was spent, and yet turned up again in the most unaccountable fashion. It was a relief when it burned, as it soon did, the proverbial hole in my one pocket. I bought a drum. Of course there never had been, and ah! there never has been since, such a drum as that. Prosaic people might see only paint and tinsel; it needed, and it had, the poet's eye of a child to discern in the tawdry colours a glow and a glory and a splendour akin to those of the hues that painted all the west when the sun went down behind the elms in the garden.

Of course I beat my drum till everyone in the house was sick of the sound. I delighted myself with the

unusual amount of noise I found myself capable of making. But when my pleasure was at its height came fatal reflection on the source of it. Whence came the delightful sound? Clearly the answer to this question was not on the outside of the drum. Hence, juvenile philosophy inferred that it must be inside. Practical conclusion—smash the parchment. Lo! inside was utter emptiness. The reason of the pleasure was not there—and in the process of seeking for it the pleasure itself had vanished.

Don't break your drum. Enjoy your happiness if you have it, and whilst you have it, do not too closely scrutinise its foundation. I confess I am apt to smash my drum. My fingers itch to break the toys of life, and even before they are broken their charm is disturbed by the sure foreknowledge that they shall be broken by-and-by. Let me tell you there is a still worse thing than smashing a drum. It is pulling a doll to pieces. It is like murder. There is nothing inside commonly but sawdust, and it makes a mess. Whatever bloom be on the cheek, however steadily the eyes may stare—once the sawdust appears, the illusion is over. I have seen most life-like dolls in Paris, and, indeed, elsewhere: dolls that looked as if they understood you, and would look so, however elevated your remarks might happen to be. Yet, when I look for a little time, I see that the intelligence is stereotyped—that it is there for all comers; that it will beam with equal and impartial radiance on Plato and on Punch; somehow I begin to think of the sawdust. I said before, "Don't break your drum;" still more earnestly do I say: Don't pull the dolls to pieces. Let the blue eyes, or the brown, or the gray, that hoard in the form of mere expression what were, doubtless,



thoughts and feelings in the ancestral eyes that expressed them first—let them beam on you and be satisfied. Don't pull them to pieces. But stay—something must have got into my pen—else why have I spoken of “ancestral eyes?” Have dolls ancestors? What can I have been meaning? However, let it stand—perhaps some one will put sense into it.

Do any-toys one ever plays with in what are called the serious pursuits of life give anything like the genuine pleasure that a child's fancy can extract from a child's plaything? A drum, or a penny whistle, or a sword of lath, or a doll made up of rags and sawdust—what a wealth of pure imaginative power of the highest dramatic order is lavished on these things by little boys and girls. And these very boys and girls will afterwards grow up (or will they grow down?) into very commonplace people, hopeful of little, dreamful of less, incapable of the dramatic effort that would be so helpful to charity, of putting themselves in the place of others whose hopes and fears and points of view may happen to be different from their own. Methinks it would be well worth a man's while if he could retain his tastes for childhood's simple pleasures. How happy would you be, reader, and how harmless, if your pleasures were still the pleasures of a child. Suppose, for instance, you retained your juvenile taste for lollypops, and your juvenile powers of digestion not yet trammelled by any compulsory eclecticism in the matter of food, how much solid happiness you could purchase for a shilling. Yet, remark, fate has taken care that even the happiness that results from lollypops shall not be too easily accessible, and has established an inverse ratio between the facility of spending the shilling and the enjoyment of the shil-



ling's worth. How cheaply might a man amuse himself if paint, and tinsel, and glare, and glitter, and noise retained their pristine power to charm his spirit; or, rather, if his spirit retained *its* pristine power to infuse into these things the charm that they had. To be sure, the world would hardly endure that a man's pursuit of happiness should cost him so little in solid money.

“Ædificare casas, plostello adjungere mures,  
Ludere par impar, equitare in arundine longa  
Si quem barbatum delectat, amentia verset.”

So sings Horace—and I, for the special benefit of my lady readers (even in these days when women's rights may be supposed to include a right to a knowledge of Latin), subjoin a very unsophisticated rendering into English—

“If any man whose beard was grown,  
To relish childish sports was known,  
Display his skill on baby-house,  
Or to a wainlet yoke a mouse,  
Play odd and even, ride a stick,  
The world would say—‘a lunatic.’”

But would the world be right in saying so, seeing the many more expensive, and, to say the least that may be said, quite as useless games it provides for its grown-up children?

And, indeed, the world has toys for bearded men and beardless women. Any talk about happiness would be incomplete without some mention of the means by which the world proposes to confer it. But the mention shall be but passing; for I fear the paper grows too long. I shall not stay or stoop to talk about “pleasure” in its meaning of pleasure of sense. If anyone thinks

that happiness lies that way, in no long time he shall find out his mistake. A man may reduce himself to the level of the brute, but even when he does, it is fortunate for him that rarely can he attain to the stolid contentment of the brute.

But what the world chiefly has is wealth and knowledge. The inability of wealth to purchase happiness has been one of the commonplaces of moral literature, at any rate, since the days of Solomon. Nor can I add anything worth adding to the illustration of the well-worn theme. Wealth purchases not happiness, but a very good imitation of it ; so good, that at a certain distance it looks marvellously like the real article. But it is remarkable that the actual possessor never finds himself precisely at that distance. However, let me say, as my not quite original contribution to the subject; whatever dreams of happiness are associated with the possession of wealth—and that there are some vivid ones, the very existence of money-lovers sufficiently attests—they are associated not precisely with the wealth a man has, but with “the little more” which so many are seeking, but which no man has ever found, or ever shall.

Who seeks for happiness in knowledge seeks it at a nobler source ; but whether it is a more certain source may well admit of question. I think Solomon says quite as strong things about its vanity as about the vanity of other things. To anyone who has ever been happy it will, on reflection, be manifest with what a vast amount of ignorance that happiness was compatible. Indeed, most happy people seem, to their observers, to be ignorantly happy. And we grow out of a great deal of our happiness as the horizon of acquired knowledge widens

around us. From this point of view it is perhaps consoling to reflect how very little most of us know, and how little capable are many of the things which we have even been at pains to learn, of interfering unduly with our happiness. For even the things we ought to know can hide themselves most modestly in mental corners unsunned by consciousness. It is astonishing how little expedite knowledge serves the turn of most of us, even of us who pretend to some degree of culture, and have our pretension allowed (chiefly by persons who have a reciprocal need of like allowance), always bating the inevitable discount with which even our best friends accept our estimate of ourselves. I shrewdly suspect that a great many things of which we are ignorant are amongst the things which, in the words of the late Lord Macaulay, "every school-boy is supposed to know."

Supposed, indeed! Let *me* suppose a little. Suppose a man stopped you in the street—you, dear reader—and addressed you thus: "Pardon me, sir; but would you favour me with the precise date of the battle of Platœa?" or, "I would feel obliged if you would give me some information about the constitution and purposes of the Amphictyonic Council;" or, "May I ask you to give me the equivalent in years before Christ of the middle of the thirty-seventh Olympiad?" What would you reply? Perhaps, if you were utterly candid, you would answer: "Well, I really can't at this moment give you, with any precision, the information you require; but if you come with me to my study I will be presently in a position to gratify your laudable curiosity." But if you were more astute, and less easy tempered, you would turn to him and say indignantly: "Sir, there

is a place for everything, and the street is not the place to ask information which the merest school-boy could furnish, and the absence of which in your case argues a lamentable deficiency in your early education. Sir, I object on principle to answer such questions. Even in those days things have not gone so far as that it needs a competitive examination to secure freedom of the street and freedom from impertinent questions." And having thus loftily put him down you might go home to your boys, and, if occasion served, might with all the gravity of a philosophic father impress upon them the inseverable bond that fate has placed between success in life and life-long mastery of the details of Grecian history.

Well, Lord Macaulay made large use of that "school-boy," and endowed him with a most unwarrantable amount of knowledge. That school-boy I have never met, nor do I believe I would much care to meet him.

I remember when I was a school-boy myself. I do not know what I was supposed to know. But I had a large quantity of miscellaneous information (as miscellaneous as the ordinary contents of an average boy's pockets) for which I got no credit whatever, but which, nevertheless, stood me in good stead among my juvenile contemporaries. For instance, no amount of acquirement in the science of projectiles could have added anything to my skill with a finger stone. I knew nothing of the relation respectively between the force of a hand stroke, the weight of a ball, the resistance of the air, the law of the parabola, and a given spot on the wall before me; and yet on an instinctive and impromptu calculation, I could put the ball just there. I knew by a sort of reflex action of the instinct of self-preservation

how high a crow's nest should be to be beyond my climbing; and was even able instinctively to make allowance for the probable avoirdupois bodily increase that made a branch unattainable in June on which I had fearlessly ventured in April. I knew the pugilistic capabilities of my schoolmates, and could estimate to a nicety, in any individual instance, how far conscious pluck could counterbalance an estimated preponderance of brute force; and in what cases discretion not only was the better part of any valour that was possible, but that any theory of valour that did not include such discretion was radically deficient in practical application. I so far entered into the feelings of birds as to be able to predicate with tolerable certainty where any ornithological specimen known to the countryside was likely to build its nest. I knew the hazel copse where nuts grew thickest, and the lonely dell where blackberries were soonest ripe. I knew what gardens it was safe to essay, and marked well the gruff gardeners whose temper, written on their faces, made them very dragons of Hesperides. I knew—but why go on recapitulating points of knowledge that are only mine in memory now? And, besides, some one may say, “Did you not set out to speak about happiness?—how far you have wandered from your subject.” To such a one I answer, “Nay, not so far: for these things *were* happiness.”

But let me finish seriously. Seriously, then, there is little or no happiness to be found here. More seriously still, made though we are for happiness, it is not for any happiness that earth can give. Seek it if you will, and as you must. Pursue the trailing garments that float ever beyond your reach on the verge of the leaden-coloured mist, that is the condemned circumstance of



your ordinary life. But even if for some brief moment you seem to catch the flying figure, beware how you sit still to cherish your happiness. That is fatal. Do you not remember the man whose whole life had been a pursuit, who had taken hold of the world and filled both his hands with all the world had to give? A worldling—but with seeming touches of relenting in his worldliness. For at last he seemed to himself to have enough. The folly of further seeking came home to him; and in his evening musing over the past and over the future, he entertained a guest that seemed strangely like wisdom. He would amass no more. Not a bad resolution in itself—but bad for him—for it marked the dying out even of the poor ideal that he had had. The gross reality upon which henceforth he was content to rest was meaner than even a miser's ideal. He folded his hands and—was happy. And lo! when the visions of the night were on men's eyes, the vision of the death-angel smote upon his. No ear but his that never again heard any sound on earth, heard the voice of doom that shrieked, "O fool!" through all the chambers of the well-filled house. And, when the morning came, they found him white and dead—and ah! no longer happy.

We are but in the desert, travelling home. We have no lasting city. Who can build of desert-sand a house that will not crumble even while he builds? If some rare days of happiness be given, they are meant to be as wells in the desert to cheer our fainting spirit for its onward journey. Wise travellers drink and are gone. It is madness to linger, and death to stay; for desert wells go dry inevitably and soon. Better even follow the *mirage* than pitch your tent on any oasis however fair. Better still to learn and take to heart the lesson

the *mirage* teaches, that not in *it* is the home and the happiness we seek : that on beyond the desert verge—many days' journey, or it may be only a few—there is a golden city where there is rest for wayworn feet and weary hearts, and where, and where alone, we may rest and be happy.

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#### X.—ABOUT SUCCESS.

THERE are two pictures in Rome that always seemed to me to typify success, though with a very different mode of presentment. One is Guido's St. Michael in the church of the Capuchins, the other, Domenichino's Death of St. Jerome, that hangs opposite to the Transfiguration in the Vatican. Both represent the only success worth having, the only success about which there can be no *arrière pensée* ; but mark with what a difference—at all events, upon the surface. The former seems to realise such a dream of success as a young enthusiastic spirit might form while yet the ways of the world were unknown, and possibilities were measured only by noble aspirations and lofty thoughts. The fight is over, and not a sign remains of the bitterness of the conflict. The glow of eternal youth, and of vigour to which no struggle could bring weariness, rests upon the Archangel's brow. Serene as if no strife had ever been, his bearing tells that even if you carried your thought back to the very crisis of the battle, you would not have

seen upon that unruffled forehead one shadow of a doubt about the issue. The imperturbable calm of a conscious minister of fate rests there. He seems just what he was, the unerring instrument of the Justice that, oppose who may, *must* conquer ; and the young eyes, too passionless to flash even in the hour of victory, are also too passionless to look with any feeling so personal as hatred upon the foe whose doom they saw before the fight began. As Satan, surely hideous enough to be the personification of all evil, lies prone and helpless, his crushed head prostrate beneath his opponent's heel, with unutterable malice transfiguring his ugliness, one feels that here, at all events, is a real, thorough success. One thinks, to be sure, and shudders to think, that even now, if, in one moment of careless scorn of the enemy he had defeated, the young angel were to lift his heel, and let the foe go free, the fight might be renewed in all its bitterness. But the angel is still vigilant, and one may trust him to keep his victory.

This, I say, is success ; but it is the success of an angel, not such success as is likely to fall to the lot of a mere mortal. A man may conquer, too, and conquer as completely ; but not in such a picture may his success be represented. The sweat and dust of battle will be upon *him*. There will be traces of blood, and scars of wounds. His armour will be hacked by many a fell stroke of battle ; there will be a look of weariness in his eyes ; and, rest assured, upon the human victor's brow will beam no placid confidence that the fight is over for ever and for aye. Even when he comes to be crowned, we know that there will be need of a hand to "wipe the tears from off his cheek."

Look now at the other picture. Ah ! here is the

success of a man. Not a victorious man, *to look at*. The flesh is wasted with life-long conflict, the eyes are hollow with the long vigilance that were vain had it not been sleepless. That face has been the battle-ground where flesh and spirit fought out their old struggle to an end that, at any period of the conflict, might have been bitter, or might have been, as it is, glorious. No outward sign is here of the Omnipotence that shaped the happy issue. It is hidden under the eucharistic veils of the Last Communion. Only death can give the *coup de grace* in this conflict, and death is very near. Just when the light of earth leaves the eyes, they shall see victory; just when the hands drop lifeless, they shall grasp success. Not, I repeat, a triumphant picture to look at—anything but that—but charged with an undercurrent of significance which whoso can discern, will see the working of the great mystery by which “the weak things of this world can confound the strong.”

This is the great success, and with these memories of two pictures I elected to begin, lest, writing “about success” in senses far lower than this I might be thought unmindful of the truth, that any success, that is in any real sense success at all, is so only and inasmuch as it is a portion, however fractional, of the happy issue in the great battle that is waged everywhere and always between what is good and what is evil.

Having thus freed my soul, I drop down to sing the “*paullo minora*” of the world under the sun. By way of striking the keynote of a lower tone, what can be more to the purpose than the smart French saying, that finds itself in those days upon so many lips. Here it is in plain English, “Nothing succeeds like success.” I confess it is a maxim for which I entertain the most



cordial contempt. It is a base maxim, but, perhaps, the only fitting watchword for an age that accepts a *fait accompli* as an adequate substitute for eternal justice. But melancholy as it is, so it is. Success is a goddess that, come in what questionable form she may, is sure to find worshippers even in this unworshipping age. The world postpones its judgment of a cause—because there are things that, to its thinking, touch the merits of the case, but which can be known only by judicious delay. It does not yet know whose battalions are best prepared, whose rifled cannon are more scientifically constructed—the eagles of victory are still in the air, they have not lighted on any standard; time enough, then, to give judgment. Meantime, the working maxim of the tribunal remains undoubted,—“nothing will succeed like success.” Wise people, however, chewing this piece of world-philosophy till they taste its poisonous bitterness, might possibly, in the view of what success means in any discourse that is likely to be its context, be inclined to suggest, as more in accordance with the larger facts of a universe of which such philosophy is, after all, only an infinitesimally small ingredient—this new reading, “nothing succeeds better than want of success.” The relative value of either reading will be differently estimated according to the tribunal before which they come for judgment.

Success is, in itself, a very generic term. In the largest sense it might be said to mean the attainment of the thing that is absolutely best for the attainer. But this is so uncommon a view of success, that any dissertation founded upon such a definition would lead one into the uninteresting region of the purely abstract. Perhaps most people regard success, in their own case.



as the attainment of their wishes ; and in general it might be adequately, for all practical purposes, defined, the attainment of such wishes as one's "world" considers worthy of attainment. From both these points of view it is obvious that the word success can scarcely convey any very definite objective idea. Wishes, even one's own wishes, are very various, are not co-ordinated on any fixed principle, and are, not seldom, contradictory. Logically speaking, whosoever wishes the end wishes the means ; but even the average mind is, in its everyday transactions, quite capable of transcending the laws of mere logic. Again, in any theory of the universe, there are a variety of "worlds," each with a very definite public opinion on the subject of success ; but as these "worlds" have scarcely any relation to each other except that of contemporaneous existence, it may easily happen that the success of one "world" may mean the dire misfortune of another—and discussion may be complicated by the inevitable recurrence of an "*ignoratio elenchi*."

I suppose everyone would like to be successful in some sense. But it would be first of all desirable that he should define for himself his own terms, and select consciously the "world" whose standard he is willing to accept. In fact he must ascertain what it is he wants ; and having made up his mind, he must count the cost. For, let me tell you, success is a costly thing, and the less it is worth the more it costs. Most people, thinking they see clearly the success they desire, are in reality looking only to the estimated result of that success, and would be very little willing to accept the previous conditions involved in its production. Most of us would like to reap without the trouble of sowing, to thrust our

sickle into other men's harvests, to have our roses without any thorns. But fate and the conditions of the universe are against us, and any success we hope to have we must have by paying for it its full market price. There is nothing for nothing. If, for instance, you want wealth, you must buy it by spending the best part of yourself in making it, and spending to a certainty the very qualities that would enable you to use it worthily. If you want popularity, you must, in most cases, pay away some part of your principles; and so on through the catalogue of things in common estimation held desirable. Whatever you want—and here is the real rub—it will cost you some of your life, little or much, and you can never begin over again.

Whatever success a man may have, and whatever be its value, he mostly feels that it has cost too much. Where is the glory of the youth before which it hovered as a vision? where the hearts whose imagined sympathy in his attainment of it, made, even in the vision, more than half its worth? It has cost too much, and it has come too late. You remember Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield—"The notice you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early it had been kind, but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it, till I am solitary and cannot impart it." Might not this furnish the ground-tone for an ode to any success you have ever known? The world, alas! is not what it was when we staked life and hope on the result which only the slow years have brought. They have brought it, but if their hands have given it, their remorseless feet have stamped down the clay upon the graves of hopes which, unfulfilled, leave this gift worthless. And worst of all, most of what the world calls success has

been achieved at the cost of the nobler parts of character. Standard had to be lowered, higher aspirations belied, principles given up or modified into worthlessness, sops thrown to this Cerberus or that—for, indeed, it was a descent *ad inferos*—before such success was possible. Make the most of it, but the scent of death is on the garments in which it is draped.

Have you ever seen a procession formed for some great object? It was formed in the cool freshness of the early morning when the earth was beautiful in the newness of the day. Dewdrops hung like happy tears on the very grass and weeds of the wayside. There were banners there and vigorous arms to bear them up, and as they shook out their silken folds to the sunshine, one saw on them talismanic words breathing hopes that seemed like prophecies. There was music, blood-thrilling, heart-shaking, that seemed to translate the beauty of the morning into sound. Above all there was the sympathy that thrilled electrically as shoulder touched shoulder when the ranks were formed. But—will the day hold? After a milestone or two, things look somewhat different. Mid-day thoughts are not as the thoughts of the morning. The sun has drunk the dewdrops, and the dust begins to rise. The banners are heavier, and strain the arms. The blazoned spellwords have in them now less of prophecy than of hope. Did some one say that even the hopes were but the ghosts of hopes that have been dying since men first were? Fainter music soon, or if not fainter, hoarser and less tuneful. This keeping rank is a weary thing as the day grows hotter. Were it not as well drop out and sit in the shade, leaving to those whose enthusiasm has not yet died out, the turmoil of the march. And see, as the day wears on

one gathers experience, becomes weather-wise, and sees clouds. And well one might, for down comes the rain. The music is drowned out, and worse still, the inner heart-music of which it strove to be the echo, has gone silent. The banners grow draggled, and trail in the mire that once was dust. The procession is broken up, the banners are stowed away, and one goes home, puts on his everyday clothes, and fills up the evening with some stroke of work which, he begins to believe, will be the only substantial result of a wasted day.

Life, to some people, and not the worst people, is some such procession, beginning with banners and music, and enthusiasm and lofty thoughts, and unselfish aims, and a great design to make the world better, ending with the chink of the guinea, or life-weariness mitigated by ill-natured comment on those who do now what they did once.

The years bring wrinkles on the heart as well as on the face. There are various layers of very varied experience, till a man is a living palimpsest with a series of different stories written one over the other—happy if the last be not the least noble. That foolish, hot-headed, hot-hearted youth, how half-ashamed he is of it as he looks back, and most ashamed probably of what in it gave the salt to the soul, and the sweetest flavour to his early character. There were then—so he sees—vast possibilities of delusion; but they connoted—as he does not care to see—a fund of deep-lying faith and unselfish purpose that would far outweigh, in heavenly balances, the wisdom that makes deception impossible. Now he does not lightly believe in others, but it may be that his want of faith is but an ugly projection of the self-knowledge that experience has forced upon him.



Then, again, how everything has changed! Ask the first old man you meet, and he will tell you that the world is very different from the world of his youth. The very seasons are not the same—winters are not so cold, summers not so warm—the men of to-day are but as children to the men of former times. It is the old story repeating itself day by day, but with a vividness that makes it seem quite original to each individual experience. For it has been always thus.

The young man with his foot upon the threshold of active life never dreams of a sorrow or a disappointment in the long future that stretches out before him as if it were infinitude itself. He stretches out two eager, open hands to the world that seems so beautiful, and he thinks that both hands may be filled with things that shall bring him happiness. Ah! let him only wait and see. He carries for the present an open brow, and a heart where day-dreams nestle. It is so easy to begin, and to begin is almost to succeed. He anticipates no failure. Others may have failed—he shall not fail. If around him lie the broken swords that fell in times past from hands as strong as his, and plumes torn from helmets that once gleamed on heads as high, he spurns the moral of experiences that are not his. He never doubts but that he shall win life's prizes, and doubts still less that if he win them they shall be as satisfactory as they seem. Building his castles in the air his youth fleets by, a shadow and a dream—a shadow that he cannot grasp and keep, a dream that shall be broken by-and-by. The years touch him as they pass, and leave the traces of their passing upon this heart. The "stern realities" begin to form a bodyguard, ay, and a soul-guard around him. In the very vigour of his manhood



he begins to find out that the world is not at all the pleasant place he thought it once. When he was a boy, he longed for the time when he should be "his own master." Now that he is a man, he learns that in this world no one can be quite his own master; and that even the degree of masterhood that manhood may have brought is very dearly purchased by the responsibility that cleaves to it as its shadow. Circumstance limits, like a bond of adamant, the most imperious self-will, and circumstance is ubiquitous and unconquerable. The world is not the pleasant place it was. Friends are rarer, hearts less tender and less true, toil is sterner, pleasures fewer than he remembers when he was a boy. He thinks the world has greatly changed since then. But, no, it is not the world that has changed, it is himself. It is only that the years have passed, and his heart has grown old, and ever as it grew old it grew sad. He may have succeeded in life, but success is no such great thing after all. It is not such success as this that would have stirred the pulses of the young heart. The fruit was fair to look at as it hung upon the tree, but now that it is plucked it is but as dust and ashes upon his lips. And then comes age—and the eyes grow dim, the hands are weak. Bodily infirmity adds itself to mental disquiet. Tired of life, and yet afraid to die—loving little the battered hulk that bears his earthly fortunes, but clinging to it with desperate fear of the unsounded ocean that lies outside—the old man's thoughts are but the echo of the words of the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."

It is very obvious to remark that success of any sort such as usually falls to the lot of man is not half so sweet in the attainment of it as in the pursuit. It is

one of those cases in which, decidedly, "distance lends enchantment to the view." There are successful men beyond a doubt. The world is careful to inscribe their names upon its calendar, and has no hesitation in appraising their success. This man succeeds or that, but his success is rather in the opinions of his neighbours than in his own. Neighbours are prone to think that any success a man may have achieved is quite in keeping with any expectations he *ought* to have formed. They are apt to overvalue result, and to undervalue deserving. They pronounce a man successful on grounds which to his own thinking are light enough. They see what he has got, they do not know what he hoped for and hoped in vain. When he thinks the matter over for himself, success, in this like most other things that concern a man, has a very different look according as the point of view is from the outside or from within. When the so-called successful man comes to take the measure of his success, it is apt to shrink strangely in the process. No man's success, however great, but is embittered by the reflection, how much greater it might have been. Others look to result, but he misses the adequate consequence of result. He has got precisely the thing he aimed at, but possession has only served to convince him that it is not precisely the thing he thought it, still less the thing he really wanted. He is wiser now, but his wisdom, like most earthly wisdom, has come too late to be anything but an unpleasant disturber of the satisfaction which, but for it, he might have derived from achievement. There was a time, and he looks back to it with a cynical smile or with a heart-rending sigh, according as his natural disposition may have

placed him in the school of Democritus or in that of Heraclitus—there was a time when this thing made the very topmost turret of his castle in the air; but now, the days of castle-building are gone for ever.

The world likes successful men, and has often been twitted for its liking by small moralists who do not themselves (on paper) like success. But consider the matter a little, and you will see that, from its own inevitable point of view, the world is not so much to blame. For by what *but* success can *it* judge of a man. Success is a thorough-going test that fits all cases, and that anyone can apply. It does away with any need of the subtle discrimination, and nice balancing of motive that a philosophic observer of character might deem indispensable. The world is too busy to observe philosophically, too busy to relish the delay of nice measurement of faculty and performance. It takes a shorter way. It wants a rough-and-ready mode of classifying its subjects, and so, it asks of a man, "Has he succeeded or not, and has he succeeded in those respects under one or other of which I rank any success that deserves the name?" If not—then he may be very admirable, but it is about ways which the world knows little and cares less. He may be compounded of the rarest mental forces, have the most charming complexity of intellectual machinery; but, he is only a cunningly-fashioned toy. He has produced nothing that can be quoted in the world's market tariff. All this is intelligible enough. The world has a standard, and applies it consistently. If a man fall below it—*or*, if a man be incommensurable by it—the world will have nothing to say to him. But if it find a man who does come up to it, it honours him and pats him on the back, and helps him to further

success of the same quality, and, perhaps, fosters that high opinion of themselves which is the weak point of successful men, at any rate in the estimation of those who have been less successful. For, indeed, these successful men are not, perhaps, the most lovable of mankind. They have their faults, and their faults are apt to make themselves disagreeably conspicuous to their humble neighbours.

They may have some grounds for conceit, but that they usually have the conceit is undoubted. The existence of due grounds for it is more problematical—but perhaps they do exist. If a man be engaged in manual labour, his hands contract a certain degree of hardness that may be quite harmless, may, indeed, be valuable for the things that it connotes, but is not, all the same, in itself a desirable thing; still less desirable, when the hand has occasion to be used on *you*. So also is it with minds. If a man have gone through the conflict with men and things that any large degree of success almost necessarily presupposes, his mind is apt to contract a hardness, not inglorious, but, then, not agreeable. In some such way I strive charitably to account for the rather unpleasant feeling produced by contact with men who have largely succeeded. They stand, too, upon the pedestal of undoubted achievement, and they can hardly help looking down somewhat upon those who have achieved no such pedestal. They can hardly help it—but that makes the matter little better for those who are looked down upon. Having succeeded, they are prompt to believe that they deserved success, and perhaps push on to the conclusion that where there is no success there cannot possibly have been any degree of deserving. Too inexperienced in the absence of desert,



they cannot attain to the sympathy that would result in pity, they have only the impatience that begets contempt. They have run in the race for which the majority of their anytime contemporaries were entered, and they are of the few who have carried off the prize. Is it wonderful they think a good deal of themselves? True, they may be jaded enough now that they have won. The race may have cost them the ultimate effort of which they were capable. They may never be good for anything again. But they have a fine consciousness of success, and, at the worst, they can pose, even in their very dotage, as models to the rising generation. I confess I do not like them overmuch, these very successful men. Their manner seems to bristle with comparisons unfavourable to their less fortunate fellows. But then *I* am not the world, and I have never had any success worth speaking about myself.

Indeed, it strikes me now that I might have been more at home in my subject had I headed this lecture otherwise than I have. Suppose I had written, "About Unsuccess," my warmer sympathies might have been elicited by the theme. Perhaps some of the most interesting of human characters have been those of men whom the world would be prompt to call unsuccessful. There is a pathos about them which is wanting in the case of more fortunate men. One can pity them, too, and it is easy to grow to love those whom we can pity. We know them in all grades of society. Not alone those grand historic figures of men who spent themselves in the pursuit of some of the splendid objects of human ambition, who failed, but in their failure left to after-times a more instructive moral than can be deduced from other men's success; but we know them also in



unhistoric grades of everyday life. You cannot fail to call to mind some such whom you have known. Men who had everything to constitute them successful except success itself. Men of large minds and warm hearts, of rare and varied powers, endowed with qualities that deserved success. But the qualities were badly mixed, and success did not result. There was "some screw loose" in the complex mental machinery, or some fatal initial *twist* of character, given perhaps a generation or two before the character became theirs, that interfered with the due development of that branch of their genealogical tree, constituted by them. Nature seemed to have given them their grand qualities, as one gives the pieces of some wonderful puzzle to a child, and they have never succeeded in getting them together to any purpose. If they do not happen to get soured by unsuccess, they become in course of time childlike in their humility. Not the least helpful of human beings are they to others. They often do for others what they are powerless to do for themselves. They are hewers of valuable wood for other men's fires, and drawers of sweet water to quench other men's thirst. Harmless, or if not quite that, falling by gravitation of their nature into the class of "nobody's enemies but their own." Having long ceased to expect anything they are abundantly, perhaps in the estimation of more high-spirited people, unduly satisfied with what they happen to get, and it may be, so far as they are themselves concerned they have as much and as good success as any, though it is not appreciable by any judgment but their own.

But I confess my profoundest pity is reserved for those whom the world deems successful, but whose own inmost hearts are gnawed by a consciousness of unsuc-

cess. We can all see the mounted knight, with spirited steed and nodding plume and clanking sword, but we cannot see the "*atra cura*" perched behind him on the crupper. But *he* feels it clinging to him relentlessly. A man's success, in the world's sense of the word, is an unmistakably patent fact. No one but a man's own self knows how unsuccessful he may have been in those things which his heart tells him are the only things that *it* would call success. Who but he has kept the doleful record of the day when enthusiasm sickened, and died a death from which there has been no resurrection? Whose hand but his has felt the keen smart when the reeds on which he leant broke short in his eager grasp? The wounds are there smarting still—it is his happiest fortune if they *do* smart still—but he has learned to hide them from a world that has little sympathy for such wounds. He and he only can tell how far performance has fallen below attempt; how hot hopes have cooled down, and lofty thoughts given place to thoughts less lofty; how the absolute right has been shouldered aside by the practically expedient; in short, how much less he is than once he aimed at being, and fondly hoped to be. The world sees only result, the world cannot see how result may have belied promise—that promise that a man's ambition made to his early inexperienced self.

Not so much a man's success, as his ideal of what *is* success, gives a very fair notion of a man's character. If out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, not the less out of the fulness of a man's character issues his ideal of success. Tell me your most persistent day-dream, tell me the object of ambition that is nearest to your thought in the early morning, and last to linger in the late night about the gate of dreams, and

I will engage to give a tolerable guess as to what manner of man you are. Does success, such as you would wish to have, lie for you in the opinion of others or in your own? Do you aim less at performance than at the result performance might be supposed to bring? Had you rather deserve success than have it without deserving or irrespective of desert? Are you one of the few who wish *to be*, or of the many who are content with such a degree of *seeming*, as, for all practical purposes, imposes sufficiently upon the society in which you live? Had you rather, to put it plainly, *seem* more and *be* less, or *seem* less and *be* more? Here be nice tests of character.

Indeed all success, so far as it is attained, is the growth of character. And perhaps the reason why success in general is so poor a thing is because in the generality of instances character affords but a meagre soil. To judge by the things men set their hearts upon, one must conclude that they are easily satisfied in their ideals, however prone to be discontented with any reality in which they have been able to embody them. Character in general affords but a poor soil; and culture of character is the most unpopular of employments. Most lives are poor makeshifts—and most men live from hand to mouth as if they were only so many bundles of permanent instincts modified by an occasional impulse.

Men scarcely know what they want. The world knows well what *it* wants. It waits for result before it cries out "success." But, in real truth, whatever success there is has been long anterior to result. When the ground was prepared, and the seed laid in the long furrow, and left as if forgotten to the dews of the night

and the sunshine of the day, and the opportune coming of the several seasons, the world went its way thinking very little of the seed. Even when in the early spring it began to paint the ridges with a tender green, it only gave relief to a weary eye; there was no success worth shouting for in the thin, delicate blade. Only when the summer sun has come after the spring rain and stirred the sap into a riot of growth, only when the corn has grown thick enough to hide the unsightly ridge from whence it sprang, only when the alchemy of autumn has touched the hanging heads and turned them into pale gold and red; only then will the world come—and come, mark you, sickle in hand—to cry out “success.”

The poet has just sung his divinest song. His soul-wings have shaken off the dust of earth, and borne him heavenward as high as it was his to go, and he flings down a rain of music perhaps from clouds that hide his deepest meaning from the many who yet are thrilled by the melodious mystery of his song. I say, not then is his success, but rather, and in nobler sense, in the long heart-loneliness of the seed time—in those days of obscurity and struggle when the seeds of song were sown in deep soul-furrows, and in storm and rain, and days of cloudlike sorrow, grew on to the ripening and to the harvest of melodious utterance.

Success is no Aladdin's palace that springs up in an hour. Success is a growth due, like all other growths, to soil and seed. And of this be sure: “Whatsoever seed a man sows, of that also shall he reap.”



## XI.—ABOUT CHARACTER.

THE study of even the simplest human character presents, to anyone who brings to the study of it a sense of even artistic conscientiousness, a very complex problem. The very first difficulty that presents itself arises from the obvious fact that at no given period that may be selected for examination is it a permanently-formed whole. Not only has it grown to be what it is, but it is in process of growing to what it is to be—and not the most gnarled oak is liable to greater eccentricities of development. It is encased in a mould of circumstance that fits it for the present, or seems to fit it, as the bark fits the tree; but all the time the inner life is acting on the outer mould, and is reacted upon by it in turn; and in this correlation of spiritual forces the axiom by no means holds that action and reaction are equal and in opposite directions. Nor is it easy to estimate the separate effect of these forces. Easy enough to see a given act or a series of actions; easy in many cases to trace a certain family likeness in each individual of the series; easy, perhaps, to make a rough estimate of the predominant quality that gives the prevailing flavour to the fruit of outward action; but not easy, nay, the most difficult of all things, to form an entirely just judgment of what falls under your observation. Even if you have all other materials for judgment, there is one that eludes your subtlest tests, and it is the one of all others that ought to enter into any judgment that deserves the



name. You know not, you cannot know, except with more or less conjectural probability, a man's motives.

Yet these are difficulties that do not seem even to occur to most of those who, whether in novel, or history, or real life, constitute themselves examiners of character. They are, as a general rule, by far too systematic. A system is, in general, a machine for saving labour, but in nine cases out of ten the labour it saves is labour that is indispensable. There is a rotundness and a completeness about a system that have an irresistible fascination for minds that imagine themselves philosophic, but are only impatient of trouble. A formula is easy to find, and easy to work. Once make up your mind that a man has a certain predominant passion, and you have but to use that as a key to unlock the mysteries of his life. But the misfortune is that life-mysteries are usually hidden under more than one lock. There are, undoubtedly, people who have a predominant passion; but there are others who seem to have several—to have a sort of gamut of passions from which the hand of circumstance evokes the most various music. And again, there are some whose lives are pale and commonplace, whose hearts are hermetically sealed, like the rock in the Arabian tale, cry how the world may its—"Open wheat," "Open barley," till at last fate shouts out: "Open sesame," and the shut heart bursts wide open.

Even if a man have a predominant passion, it is certain that it is not the mainspring of all his acts, perhaps not the mainspring of all his characteristic acts.

Most human characters are like globes—every point on the surface has its antipodes.

The inconsistencies of character lie upon the surface,

so far as observation of character is concerned; but when it comes to the reading of character, I am inclined to think that they lie rather at the root. Just as in taking the dimensions of a rectangle you measure the two sides that lie at right angles; so by taking the two sides of an inconsistency you can measure character. This is almost certainly the case when one side of the inconsistency lies in the realm of theory, and the other in the domain of practice.

People sometimes say of a man, "*Nil æquale homini fuit illi.*" Never a man so unlike himself at one time and at another. Yet examine closely and you will probably find that the seeming unlikeness proceeds from some one deep-seated principle that makes him fundamentally the most consistent of men. Let me give an instance. You meet a man who dislikes work, who takes things easily, whom you would be inclined to call lazy; and yet, on occasion, you find him doing what he has to do with the restless energy of a steam-engine. "Inconsistent," you say. Not so; but he is a miracle of indolence, and he is so indolent that when he has anything to do it is necessary to his comfort to get done with it as quickly as possible in order that he may get back to the beatitude of having nothing to do.

Hence, indolent people, if they be thoroughly indolent, are rarely procrastinators. Procrastination would cost them too much. This, however, is to be understood, provided that along with the indolence they have two other things—a strong sense of duty, and a vivid imagination. The former is necessary to overcome their constitutional reluctance to act at all; the latter to enable them to realise the future discomfort consequent upon present inaction.

There are people of this sort who, under a strong sense of duty, or under pressure of circumstance, contrive to spend a very busy lifetime. On the surface they are the last people in the world whom you would call indolent; but beneath the surface they are sick of it all. They often long to have done with the world, and wish "'twere night and all well." They long for the time when, after life's fitful fever, they may sleep in some quiet corner of the churchyard. Their notion of heaven is as of a place of rest, like the poor German woman of all work who dreamt of heaven as of a place where she might sit for ever in a clean cap, and with folded hands, singing quiet psalm tunes to herself. But here occurs to me what I take it would be an excellent solvent of character.

Ask a man what is his notion of heaven, and if he could himself ascertain what it was, and if he were candid enough to tell you, you would have very little more to learn about him. To one it would be a place of rest, to one, a field for unresting energy—to one, of endless variety, to one, of unchanging happiness, the essence of which would be that it was unchanging. I wonder will the real heaven be in any degree adapted to particular idiosyncracies. Will minds give some little of their own colouring to the white light that will shine for ever? Will special roots of earthly experience grow up and blossom into particular flowers? The last thing I should expect to meet in heaven would be a dead level of intellect and taste. I admire the notion of some of the theologians, that each individual angel is a distinct species in himself.

A very good test of character may be found in a man's views with regard to variety and monotony.

Some love change for change sake. In the midst of even the happiest present they fling themselves into the future. Others cling to the present, and to the people and things around them, and so let them grow into their hearts that any change must bring with it a tearing up of roots, and that consequent displacement of soil that seems to them to disfigure life. Some would fain have a new and glittering suit for each separate day of life's pageant. Others make to themselves a sombre-seeming but well-fitting garb of everyday habit, and wear it till it grows to them as the shell grows to a mollusk, and defends them almost from fate itself. Indeed they are human mollusks, and have need of their shell to protect their boneless frame from contact with the rude world. It has been said that if a coal of fire be placed upon the back of a tortoise the poor creature will creep out of its shell. This, I believe, is not the case. But in the case of such human mollusks as I have spoken of, there are coals that make them creep out of their shell of long-formed habit. And very cold and miserable they look, and exquisitely sensitive, and it is well if some jagged pieces of the shell do not remain clinging to the raw flesh. I have seen them—*moi qui vous parle*.

Yet another key to unlock some of the inner chambers of character seems to be found in the way men bear misfortunes. Some bear them badly, by which I do not mean precisely that they feel them acutely; for some who feel them acutely bear them well. But some bear them badly in that they nurse them and brood over them.

If you have ever seen that saddest of sad sights, a mother nursing her dead child, you will have a vivid



illustration of what I mean. She knows the child is dead, but she will not admit so much—yet. She clings to the dead clay and will not let it go. Her eyes, that feel not yet the comfort of tears, will not look to the dreary present. They persist in going back upon the past—when the little eyes lay open and smiling with the light of life, when the little restless fingers closed over her own and stroked her face, when the delicate bloom lay fresh and fair upon the dimpled cheek. Now the waxen fingers are stiff and straight, not to be moved by the glitter of the gayest bauble. The eyes are closed, or worse still, lie staring wide open, as if they were the gates whence the little life went out. The “cold hand” has brushed away the bloom, and stolen the baby smile, and smoothed out the dimples. Poor mother, still she *will not* believe. Miracles never cease. The impossible of all ages may be the reality of to-day. There is life in her heart for two—perhaps a spark may leap into the dead child. Or what if she wept? Drooping flowers have revived when the rain fell. She will not see that her crushed flower has been cut away from the root, and that it can never bloom again on this side of the grave.

Just so some people nurse their dead past that has been killed by some misfortune. They go back, and keep going back continually to what they conceive to have been a “turning point,” and keep saying to themselves, “If at such a time I had only done so and so.” They never forgive themselves for their mistakes, and that is the worst mistake of all. It is commonly thought that men most easily condone to themselves their own faults, but it is not always so; and some men who have been “their own worst enemies” find it almost impossible to forgive themselves.



Others—whether better men or worse I shall not decide, but whether better or worse, certainly of stronger mental fibre—easily reconcile themselves to the inevitable, simply on the ground that it is inevitable. Their motto is—

“For every evil under the sun  
There is a remedy or there’s none;  
If there is one, try and find it;  
If there is not, never mind it.”

In truth, the gravest misfortune that can befall a man in this life will be much alleviated by the reflection that the mere passing of time will take away all, or nearly all, its bitterness. In a week you will feel it less, in a month still less, in a year scarcely at all, in ten years either you will have forgotten it altogether or it will be one of those things, bitter enough in the happening, which by a curious anomaly, it will be a pleasure to remember. “*Olim hæc meminisse juvabit*” is profoundly true of the bitterest misfortunes. While you feel them they may seem intolerable, but when you come to tell about them after some time, they are tolerable enough.

“Infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem,

says Æneas—but one feels that it was a piece of hypocritical sentiment in that most milk-and-water of epic heroes. He called his sorrow “unutterable,” but he contrives to utter it in very smooth hexameters; and does anyone believe that when the pious Æneas got a chance of beguiling poor Dido with the tale of his sorrows, the chief part of their bitterness was not over?

The fact is, the most ordinary experience teaches how time dulls the keenest emotions. This, I say, is a

lesson that experience can teach everyone, but it is a lesson that not everyone is willing to learn. Most people are under the delusion that the learning of such a lesson would be, in some sort, a treason to the past. They love to cling to the notion that their present feeling, especially if it be very deep, and very lively, will be everlasting. They cannot bear to think that the hot tears will be all dried up, and the passionate sorrow cooled, and the dead friend be merely a dim memory, and that the day may come when they could stand tearless beside the grave and criticise the epitaph. But such things happen. It may seem cynical to recognise even their possibility, but they are possible—nay, probable—nay, even likely—nay, in most cases, absolutely certain. It is best to recognise the effect of time upon mere emotion, and to learn to link our friendships and our loves with something in their objects that time cannot destroy.

People, I suspect, are slow to acknowledge all this. They fain would cling to present feeling, and construct an imaginary future on the shifting basis of a passing emotion. But nature is kinder to them than they wish. Time and nature will console them in their own despite. Not more surely will moss accumulate and ivy creep over old gray walls, than a covering of graceful and protecting sentiment will spread itself over the ruins of a human past.

Have you ever stood beside a fresh grave that hid away a heart you loved? Then, and for a time, as is the wont of graves, it looks dreary and desolate. It is quite in keeping with your present feeling. The spade has beaten the grass flat; the sods lie uneven; fresh, damp clay is trodden into the place, and all growth

seems to have left the spot for ever. But it is not so. The kindly charities of nature and of time clothe even graves with verdure. Soon the grass is green again, and sometimes chance or a kind hand plants a flower that flourishes. Even so is it with the graves of all dead hopes. Wait in faith for the flowers that shall surely come, and that shall be all the fairer because they grow upon a grave.

The clinging to the belief in the perpetuity of present emotions is one of those illusions which people are unwilling to have dispelled. Youth clings to its ideals, and shouts out a "credo" that the experience of all manhood will proceed to contradict; and will go on to build an edifice of mistake upon a foundation of error, and is not in the least obliged to anyone who tries to make it wise before its time. Youth is so high-spirited it will not beg, nor will it borrow; it will buy, even, if need be, with tears and blood, its own experience. It hates to be wise. Says Goethe, "Every man commonly defends himself as long as possible from casting out the idols he worships in his soul; from acknowledging a master error, or admitting any truth that brings him to despair." Nevertheless, truth is best. The pure white light is a better medium for seeing than any gorgeous, many-coloured mist.

So I preach, but when it comes to practice that is quite another thing. A physician can write his prescription with exemplary coolness, even though the hieroglyphics represent the nastiest drugs in the pharmacopœia. But then, you see, he has not to take it himself. When he falls sick he sends for another physician and gets his dose. I confess it is the saddest thing in life this clearing away of the illusions that hang

like golden mists about the sunrise of the noblest lives. But it is a thing than which nothing better indicates and registers progressive growth of character. One by one, as the white day broadens, the clouds that glorified the dawn fade out and lose their lustre. One by one the cherished illusions vanish, and leave only the memory of a glory for which nothing that comes after is quite a substitute. Ah! the dear time when the heart was young, and when not the shadow of doubt or of misgiving dimmed the magic mirror in which youth saw life and the world, and the men and women that are in it.

When I think of it I could almost cry out: "Cherish your illusions as long as you can, for life will scarcely ever bring you any reality so graceful as they were." But I am just now the physician, and I feel called upon to examine and prescribe for some cases of illusion that have been waiting in the antechamber of my mind whilst I have been in the inner laboratory concocting the previous portions of this lecture. First case (*place aux dames*): A young lady under the impression that "first love," with its unutterable spooniness, is going to last for ever, and to stand every shock that time and experience will administer. Second case: A young man with a turn not so uncommon for sentimentality of a milk-and-water (but more water than milk) character; and this complicated by an unfortunate capability of stringing rhymes together. The young fool seriously believes in his heart of hearts that Shakspeare himself never wrote such verses (which, by the way, is true enough—in a sense), and that he is going to take his place amongst the very few immortals whom fate has selected from the countless millions who have lived and died and been forgotten. A bad case. Again, a

third patient : An ill-treated, hardly-used wife, who persists in fondly hoping that her brute of a husband will one day, as by miracle, cast the slough of his brutality, and appear in the shining splendour of the before-marriage courtship ;—the worst case of all. And now what shall I prescribe ? First—general prescription for all these cases—time, more or less, according to the patient's constitution : experience, *quant. suff.* This of itself will be amply sufficient for the first case. No danger of the young lady ; she will get over it. For the second case is needed besides a special remedy. It is this : Good hard work, *real* work, mental or physical, the latter always more effective because more unmistakable in the application. Should this fail or be slow in operation, select according to his own taste his ablest poem, and enclose it to a first-rate periodical that finds that it pays to pay its contributors. Wait for the result, and if that fails to cure him he is incurable.

For the third case—ah ! my hand falters. What prescription can effect a thorough cure—save this—let the sufferer be laid (in God's good time) in fresh earth and left there in peace. This is all I can prescribe. I may be just now a physician, but I am a man, and I have no heart to dispel, even if I could, which I doubt, the silver mist that may serve to hide the hard outlines of many a sorrow from “faded eyes that long have wept.”

Now, having dismissed these importunate patients, I return to my proper subject. When human characters first began to be, we find recorded about them a very significant fact. “Male and female He created them ;” and appropriating the quotation, I add, “and male and female they have remained ever since.” By this



apparently trite remark I do not mean merely that the human race has always consisted of two classes, men and women ; but I mean, moreover, that there is sex in mind as well as in body ; that there are, and have always been, characters masculine and characters feminine ; and that the distinction between them is so much deeper than distinction of physical sex, that there are very masculine minds disguised by the appendage of petticoats, and feminine minds that utter themselves to the world through the barriers of a mustache.

Amongst masculine minds I reckon those that are to a large degree under the dominion of principle. Feminine minds, on the other hand, are largely swayed by feeling. There are people of both sexes who have an intense love of justice, and a keen sense of right, and a very passion for logic in their lives ; people who are impelled as by a necessity of their nature to interfere in setting right even things that don't seem to concern them ; who are not satisfied with executing their own part in any plan of action, but also consume themselves with solicitude about the execution of the parts that fall to the lot of their colleagues. These are eminently minds masculine. Very good people they are, but I doubt if they are pleasant people to live with, and I am sure they will never attain to any large degree of popularity, except, perhaps, amongst those who have the advantage of contemplating their undoubted virtues from a sufficient distance.

On the other hand, there are people who have the comfortable faculty of taking things easy ; who, so far from interfering in other people's business, are scarcely solicitous about their own ; who are little troubled by any aberration of the social system, provided it falls

short of disturbing their own personal comfort. They are usually genial, pleasant-spoken people, full of animal spirits, with a ready smile and a kind word, and a charming toleration for their own shortcomings, and indeed for those of others that lie outside the plane of their personal convenience. Very pleasant people to meet in society—not, I suspect, quite so pleasant at home. Even normal geniality suffers a reaction, and the reaction usually takes place in the privacy of domestic retirement. Indeed, easy-going though they seem, I have observed that no people are more strongly of their own opinion, or better like to have their own way. Can it be that those pleasant-mannered, easy-natured people are selfish?

Selfish people are those whom nine persons out of every ten would be prompt to class under the category of "good-natured." To be thoroughly and enjoyably selfish it is necessary to be on easy terms with oneself, to have a fair share of animal spirits and good humour, and, above all, to have an ineradicable conviction that the world and the people in it were made for one's own personal convenience. Watch your good-natured man. Under a superficial carelessness there is an ever present care to have everything just as he wants it. Under an apparent indifference about alternative plans there works an inexorable determination to pursue one and not the other. He rarely has any strong sense of duty to make him disagreeable. I say to make him disagreeable, for, as the world is at present constituted, I defy any man who has a strong sense of duty not to make himself occasionally disagreeable. The good-natured man exacts from others no unnecessary sacrifices, and in his view no sacrifice is ever necessary

except where there is question of his own will or his own interest. As long as these are not involved, he is for letting all the world do as it pleases, and all the world conspires to bestow on him the title of the most good-natured of men.

Never, as it seems to me, have the two classes of human character been placed in sharper contrast than in those exquisitely balanced phrases in which Sallust paints the characters of Cæsar and of Cato.

Each class has its uses—each its merits. As the old woman said, "It takes a mort of men to make a world." As for me, I would deem myself sufficiently happy if I had Cæsar for an everyday acquaintance, and Cato for a friend in need.

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## XII.—ABOUT CULTURE.

"CULTURE" is a word that begins to be in disrepute with clear-minded men. It means, at the same time, so much and so little. It is an admirable word to round a weak sentence or give an appearance of strength to a weak argument. Does any young gentleman, whose actual knowledge of the world is in inverse ratio to what he imagines it to be, wish to dazzle unsophisticated friends by professing a contempt for opinions that were the heirlooms of generations before he was born, he has only to enrol him among the votaries of 'culture.' If he wish to hide his ignorance of the facts

involved in a discussion, he can take refuge in a foregone conclusion, baptize it with the name of "theory," and let "culture" stand sponsor for the intellectual bantling. Culture either ignores religion or patronises it; explains morality on purely natural principles; has about everything a view so procrustean in its character that it exacts the lopping off of innumerable truths. It is not satisfied with studying a subject after the good old fashion of collecting facts, it must bind the facts together in a theory, and devise a "philosophy" of everything. The human mind is, to be sure, limited in its capacity, and even the utmost diligence can scarcely attain to exhaustive knowledge even on a single subject; but that need not stand in the way of a "philosophy." Culture appropriates the legal maxim, "*De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*," and calmly proceeds to round its system.

Of course all this has been said with regard to culture that is spurious. The word undoubtedly expresses a reality, and a very desirable reality; but like other words that cover large meanings, it has been so abused in its application that, in nine cases out of ten, it expresses a mere "sham." Culture, in its best sense, is the last result of education properly so called. It means cultivation of the mind, and that not a cultivation consequent on the mere sowing of the seeds of knowledge, but including also such due attention to the conditions of growth and to the qualities of the soil, as will best prepare for a worthy harvest. Mere knowledge is not culture, nor will it produce culture. A man's mind may be a vast repository of facts without having the least claim to be a really well cultivated mind. Between the one and the other there is all the difference



that there is between the wareroom of an upholsterer and a well furnished house. One has all the other has, and more ; but the nice taste, and the judicious arrangement, and the skilful adaptation of means to ends, are all wanting. Indeed the value of mere knowledge as an instrument of culture has been greatly overrated in this age that prides itself on being above all things "practical." Knowledge, when it means merely knowledge of facts, is, as often as not, an obstacle to culture. Unless knowledge of facts be co-ordinated under the guidance of the higher knowledge of principles, it may be likened to a heap of bricks rather than to a finished building.

Books are so obviously instruments of culture that we are apt to think that they are its only instruments. But there is a culture deeper and truer than any culture that books produce. There were educated men, in a very true sense of the word, before books were, and wherever there was education there was culture. Let us not confound the accident of an era with the essences of things. If culture could be only the result of learned leisure, of studious habit, of lifelong devotion to books, it would be the fortune of so few that it would scarcely be worth taking into account as a social force. But there is a degree of culture within the reach of even men who have neither leisure nor love for books. The truth is, morality rather than literature, is the real wand of culture ; and there is a culture of a very valuable kind that comes even to illiterate men, from long-practised habit of right thinking on the elementary principles of human action, and right acting in the ordinary relations of human society.

I am not one of those who wish to quarrel with the



age in which they live. Like every other age that ever was, it is both good enough and bad enough for the people who are in it. If there be any safe conclusion on such a subject, it is this, that it is just the age for you and for me, precisely because it is the one in which we find ourselves. But, like all other ages, it has two very distinct aspects. Under one aspect, the "age" may be said to consist of the great mass of commonplace people who mind their own business, who do the real work of the world, who plough, and sow, and reap and toil and die, and leave no record of themselves save in the moral instincts that their lives have fostered, and in the fence and furrow and house that descend to the ages that come after them. But under another aspect the "age" comes to signify the minority who seem to live to make a noise: who write, and speak, and seek to rule their fellows by voice or pen or sword. Now it would be ill for any age if it were to be estimated solely by considerations derived from contemplation of the latter class. Assuredly they are not the most reputable portion of society. The political honesty of members of parliament will certainly not be greater, will, very probably, be less, than that of the constituencies that elect them. The political honesty of these constituencies will very likely fall somewhat below that of the great non-electoral mass around them. And as in politics, so is it in other things. Not in the noisy people who claim to represent society will the merits of that society be found in their highest perfection. Its defects will be epitomised in them with sufficient accuracy, but not its best qualities. It is the silent masses that give its momentum to the age; and when we read in history of societies so corrupt that it is to us an

insoluble problem how they did not fall suddenly to pieces, our wonder will be lessened if we reflect that beneath the rotten surface of which we read there was an unrecorded mass of patient industry and honest purpose that made no noise, but that silently saved society.

I have said this, because any talk about culture seems necessarily to lead to certain disparaging conclusions about the "tendencies of the age," and I would not have it thought that I see nothing in the times in which I live except the things that seem to deserve censure.

If anything can with safety be predicated about the age, it is that it is pre-eminently a reading age and a writing age. Yet even in this reading age the great majority of men do not read. The amount of ignorance of even contemporary literature is simply amazing. Take the half dozen or so of names that to your thinking have written themselves across the age in letters of gold, and ask half a dozen of your busy acquaintances what they think about them, and you will find they think nothing at all about them, simply because they do not know them. What a thing fame is! There are very good men—nay, very intelligent men—nay, men well enough read in the literature of their own young days, who have never heard more than the names of Tennyson, and Browning, and George Eliot.

Now, we are apt to confound "culture" with "*our* culture," and to imagine that persons who happen to be unacquainted with what perhaps is the only thing we know, are therefore uncultivated. But it is a mistake. We meet a middle-aged man who either has not read or does not like the Laureate, who is simply indignant with the obscure word-juggling and thought-juggling

of Browning, whose moral nature is revolted by the cultured indifferentism of George Eliot, and straightway we look on him as—intellectually—a boor. But he may know his Homer and his Horace—may have a keen appreciation of Shakspeare, may be well up in the *Spectator*, and may have living in his memory passages of Pope that, strange as it may seem to a younger generation, bring tears into his eyes. Do you think he has much to learn in the way of art from the last new novel or new poem? Fashions change, as in other things, so in literature; but the elements of thought or of poetic feeling do not change. The last literary dress catches your eye and takes your fancy; but do you suppose that the thing dressed, if it be worth anything, if it be not a mere lay-figure to show off the fine wares of the writer, is not as old as the very world? Indeed there is a great danger that real culture will be rendered impossible by too much reading. How can a man preserve his intellectual balance, except by not reading at all, in those days when every second man you meet in society has written something, and when every man seems to think it desirable to read all that has been written? Perhaps of the two it would be a less evil to read nothing than to aim at reading everything. At any rate, the question arises, whether would it be better, in the interests of true culture, to read only what everyone is talking of just now, or to read what everybody will be talking about in a hundred or two hundred years? Yet we have upon our book-shelves, covered with the dust of undisturbed repose, books which we may be sure will last another hundred years, if only because they have already lasted, one, two—nay, in the case of Homer, twenty-seven hundred years.

Why will not the general reader confine his reading to these to the saving of his pocket and his time, and to the lasting benefit of his mind? The reason is that, in nine cases out of ten, the general reader reads not for love of art or desire of knowledge, not for beauty of thought or of expression, but either to kill time or to satiate his thirst for *gossip*. It is an age of "small talk" about everything in which everyone feels competent to take a part. There is, perhaps, about the usual average of mental activity, but it is very evenly distributed over a large surface. No one has much, everyone has a little. There is no leviathan, but there are shoals of minnows. A man wants to meet in his books precisely such thoughts as pass through his own mind. He has an intense curiosity about the affairs of his neighbours. He has neither wish nor capacity for severe thinking. He wants to be amused precisely as he would be amused by the ordinary gossip of any social circle within his reach. And accordingly he reads his modern novel, or the smart paper in the *Review*, or the newspaper article from the flippant pen of some one who would be mortally ashamed to be thought ignorant of anything. And this, forsooth, is culture! It is sitting at the feet of such Gamaliels that qualifies a man to arraign before the bar of culture systems and opinions which, to say the least that can be said in their favour, represent an amount of intellectual effort and patient thought of which the world of to-day seems absolutely incapable.

The mind of the unfortunate "general reader" is subjected to a drenching process. The incessant flood rolls on, *labitur et labetur*—novel, poem, essay, article—small talk about theology, philosophy, science, politics—



—is it any wonder that the original colour is quite washed out of the modern mind? "Did you read this?" "Have you seen that?" "Have you heard that such a work is in the press?" I declare I sometimes wish the press were stopped for, say, a decade, if only to show how well the world would get on without it, and how little the cause of true culture would suffer by its silence.

It was said of old, "*timeo hominem unius libri*," but I would say rather, "I fear the man of no book," if such could be found; a man who had not overlaid his natural intelligence with the fossil remains of other men's thinking; who was able to bring his mind to bear upon a subject without allowing it to be hidden from him by bandages of printed matter. There are too many books. I say it, who dearly love books.

But some one may say: "There need not be too many books for *you*, for you need only read those you choose." Yes, but there is a consequence not pleasant—indeed, except to a very strong-minded man, not tolerable. You would be out of the fashion. Read only the best books, and you are an "old fogie" with an old-fashioned taste for classics, which the world of to-day calls pedantry—with a love for old English literature which the youth of the period deems either simple affectation or downright eccentricity. And yet the old books are likely to be the best books. Of course a good book may come forth any day; but it is hard to know it. Popularity is so poor a measure of literary merit, that, considering the past history of literature, it is hardly a paradox to say, that the more popular a book is at the time of its publication, the less likelihood is there that it is a classic. This is especially true at the present



day ; for, considering the motives that make men write and read, it is almost certain that the writer will write for the day and to the day, and that the reader will be caught precisely by that which interests him so nearly that it will have no possible interest for his grandchildren. Shakspeare, in his literary aspect, was a considerable time making his way into the favour of the general public. It took a century to establish "*Paradise Lost*" as a great epic. Now-a-days an author finds himself famous in the morning issue of a newspaper, and may esteem himself peculiarly fortunate if the blossom of his fame do not fall off before it has been gathered into the *herbarium* of a "*Quarterly*."

All this might be let to settle itself, and would scarcely deserve even a passing notice, were it not for some of the phenomena to which it gives rise. One phenomenon is this: You have, we will say, some literary experience, and some knowledge of the normal course of things in the literary world. Consequently you are by no means attracted by success that bears every sign of being ephemeral. You are not at all willing to pin your faith to opinions that have only stood the test of newspaper criticism. If you want to understand a subject, you prefer reading it up in some book which the opinion of more than one generation has pronounced respectable. Fortified by such an authority, you venture fearlessly into discussion. But you are met on the very threshold by the question: "Have you read *Plausible* on this subject?" You are compelled to admit that not only have you not seen *Plausible's* book, but you have never heard of the existence of *Plausible* himself. "But surely you have seen the able article in Monday's *Times*, or the clever paper in the current

number of the *Contemporary*?" In vain you reply that sources such as these do not seem to be necessarily fountain-heads of truth—you are quietly deposited outside the discussion.

This omnivorous appetite for books results in a very deceptive gloss upon the surface of society. Never was there so much appearance of culture with so much very real ignorance. There is abroad a pretence of universal knowledge. Men have become intolerant of mystery and impatient of faith. The world postulates its own omniscience and its power of accounting for everything. The culture that springs from such postulates will not rise above its source. And that source is mere assumption. It will produce ingenious theories and able books, but it will not furnish a key to the great universe. It will produce "philosophies of history" that explain everything to-day with an amusing finality, but that find themselves out of date to-morrow in the presence of new facts that necessitate a new theory.

Indeed, in no field has modern culture better loved to disport itself than in the same field of the "philosophy of history," and in no department of study can the measure of that culture be better taken. The philosophic historian has neither doubt nor hesitation about anything. Everything is "naked and open to the eye." There is no department of human knowledge, however remote from the ordinary paths of the student of history, in which he is not better qualified to pronounce than men who have made it their life-long and exclusive study. It is true he is liable to ludicrous mistakes, but they escape the notice of that poor dupe—the general reader.

Buckle is, I suppose, the great hierophant of this philosophy of history. In audacity of intellect, and in assumption of omniscience, he distances all his competitors. I remember very well the first time I read his fascinating book—and indeed it is fascinating, especially on the first perusal. I was greatly taken by his indisputable power of dealing with his very complicated subject, and I was so unsophisticated at the time that I might possibly have swallowed all his assertions without even the corrective of the proverbial “grain of salt”—but for one little note that I chanced upon early in his first volume. It concerned a subject about which I happened to know something, and I must say that my faith in his omniscience was considerably shaken when I found him confounding the scholastic controversy about “indifferent acts” with the very different question of “Probabilism”—which, I may remark for the information of my non-theological readers, is just as gross a blunder as if a writer were to confound a controversy about the abstract conditions of a just war with the discussion of a system of military tactics.

However, a philosophy of history is a dream of the day. There are certain very obvious lessons taught by history that may, if you will, be called its philosophy. “Public crime will issue in public suffering.” “Seed sown will produce a crop after its own kind.” “Public honesty is the best public policy.” “Scepticism and irreligion in one age will produce revolution and bloodshed in another.” These and kindred maxims, that may be gathered on the very surface of history, make a very admirable philosophy. But when one goes farther and becomes more ambitious; when one seeks to trace the history of society, not only as from acorn

to oak, but from new crops of acorns to new growths of oaks in all manner of different soils ; when one aspires to account for everything, to penetrate the depths of everything, to know the past so thoroughly as to leave no mystery in the future : then, indeed, the "philosophy of history" is of no easy achievement. That there is a philosophy of history in a sense wider than even the dreams of human ambition, I devoutly believe. But it is found in its perfection only in the mind of God. One day, when all is over, He will unfold the web of human history, and men will see branded upon the warp and woof of it, that luminous sentence which must in the meantime serve us as the first principle of such provisional philosophy of history as we are capable of—"All things work together for good to them that love God." (*Rom.* chap. viii.)

The culture of the age has a critical turn, for the age itself is a critical age. Not precisely in the sense that a judiciously critical spirit is common, but rather in the sense that men are in a critical mood, and in a critical attitude. They seem to sit like the Epicurean gods calmly contemplating the world, caring equally—that is, not at all—for one thing and for another ; not moved to enthusiasm by virtue, nor to indignation by crime ; analysing everything, admiring nothing. A great criminal is not so much a monster to be reprobated as a pathological study of character. A saint or a hero is to be accounted for by the action of ordinary social forces, which, to say the least, do not seem capable of producing either. Above all, the judicious critic must keep himself aloof from sympathy with his subject. He must preserve his lofty superiority and his calm indifference.

Naturally enough in the authors of the day who have

achieved the largest popularity one can best trace the characteristics of the culture that is in vogue. If this be so, assuredly one of the characteristics of modern culture is *not* a very high degree of poetic excellence. First, I suppose, comes the Laureate. I dare say no poet was ever so widely read in his own time, or more generally admired; but not even his admirers would venture to claim for him a place in the first rank. The truth is, he is not a great poet—perhaps not even secure of a place in the second class of English poets. He has been more than forty years before the world, and has scarcely ever surpassed the “Mort d’Arthur,” written nearly that many years ago. He has written exquisite blank verse, so exquisite that it tends, at times, to be monotonous. His claims are to be measured by his loftiest attempt and his greatest achievement. He took early possession of the Arthurian legend, and has brooded over it for more than a generation. But what has he made of it? Not a great poem, but a series of highly finished cabinet pictures. He has not had sufficient poetic fire to fuse his materials into one great admirable whole; and, after playing with his subject for a lifetime, he has been forced to transpose his various renderings from their original order of publication that he might give some appearance of unity to his conception. But whatever unity there is must be regarded as the result of an evident after-thought. In fact, the poetic littleness of the age is mirrored in the attempt of its most popular poet—an attempt in which no one has ever been or ever will be successful—to give the world an Epic in instalments. The Laureate never forgets himself, is never quite carried away by the fervour of his genius: writes, as some



one says of him, with a severity all the greater because it is unconscious, "like an English gentleman," as if a modern English gentleman could possibly afford a lofty ideal to one who aspired to be the poet of more than one or two generations. There is a hothouse flavour about most things that he has written. If he be, in any sense, a great artist, he is merely an artist in words; and his is not that highest art that so simulates nature as to be itself forgotten. One merit he has, and it is a great one. He has that love for the tools with which he works that is characteristic of a good workman. He has been careful to write pure sweet English, and has been swayed through his whole career by an evident desire to please his public.

That this is in itself a great merit will be the more evident when we come to examine a writer whom many consider to be his rival, if not his superior. Take up Browning, and I venture to say that, if your tastes have been formed upon classics, whether ancient or modern, your first feeling will be one of impatient disgust with a writer who seems to hold in utter scorn the elementary principles of pure English composition. If you overcome the reluctance to read, which it would seem to be his first object to excite; if you patiently pursue his thought through the obscurities, and the inversions, and the general unintelligibleness in which it seems to be his delight to involve it, you may possibly be rewarded by a wonderful display of very subtle analytical power; but all the more will you be indignant with the intellectual perversity that hides so much power under such ungainly form.

His power, undoubtedly, lies in analysis, and in this, precisely, he is a representative man of an age in which

he has achieved a larger degree of popularity than a casual reader would be inclined to think possible. He throws himself into all sorts of characters; and yet he seems to me to be essentially undramatic in the sense in which all the world perceives Shakspeare to be dramatic. Browning reminds me of those weird stories in which a spirit is represented as entering into bodies that had been long dead, and waking them up from their rest to do fantastic tricks that yet have in them and through them a touch of the old nature. He can enter into the dead past and can make it live again, after a fashion. But you are always conscious that the animating spirit is the spirit of Browning, and the life you witness is not the real life of the long ago, but such life as it would have been, had the poet lived it under the assumed conditions.

The third name on my list is George Eliot, a writer, who, however different from Browning in readableness, seems to me to be so kindred to him in the most characteristic aspects of her genius, that she may, like him, be regarded as a special representative of an age that is lost in admiration of her wonderful books. She, too, has a marvellous power of entering into lives most alien to the ideal an admiring reader would be inclined to form of her own. But there seems through all her personation to preside a calm, indifferent, critical spirit that keeps her aloof from mere humanity; an impartiality that is, so to speak, so *unhuman* that it ends with repelling one. Her latest work, "Middelmarch," embodies at once her highest excellence and her great defect. That excellence consists in wonderful analysis of very various character, subtle speculation upon human motives, a grandeur of conception and a grasp

of detail, an artistic conscientiousness that leaves nothing unfinished, that bestows equal care upon her greatest characters and her least. The defect is best illustrated by the fact that, beginning with an ideal so high as St. Teresa, she has no better fate for her heroine than to allow her to "decline to the lower range of feeling" implied by her love for Ladislav, the limpest character in the whole book. It is as great an anticlimax as any I know. In truth, these wonderful books, describing everything with a life-likeness that is absolutely photographic, issue, one and all, in a hopelessness of human destiny that leaves upon me, at all events, a most painful impression. She has evident glimpses of a lofty ideal which she has never been able to carry out, because she has never found the path that leads from here to hereafter, from the natural to the supernatural, from the story of human struggle to the crowning of human effort.

The books of which I have been speaking bear upon them, one and all, the stamp of a self-consciousness which an unfriendly critic would be prompt to characterise as self-conceit.

There is another writer whom I almost hesitate to mention, and I do so only because I fear he is too truly representative, and representative of the worst aspect of modern culture. It is Swinburne. It is sad to think that so much sweet music should have been lavished upon thoughts that would better become a lost spirit than a human being. And, in truth, in this I sum up my brief criticism of his poetry, that it is exactly what Satan himself might write, and, doubtless, would write, were he not saved the trouble by finding ready to his hand human instruments who do his work with all his

malice, and perhaps with an effectiveness that could hardly be attained by a mere spirit, who had only a conjectural knowledge of the joint working of fleshy instinct and spiritual nature.

Should I live to the year 1900—which would be by no means an abnormal event in the annals of longevity—I anticipate considerable amusement from the contemplation of the fossil remains of leviathan reputations that were to have lasted for ever. Shall I venture on a little prophecy, though prophecy can scarcely serve any useful purpose when it merely professes to be the projection into the future of the tastes and feelings of the present. Tennyson will still be read, but not by the thousands who read him now. Longfellow, I venture to predict, will have risen considerably in public favour. The “poet of the future” will scarcely have arrived so soon. Probably he will hail from the “States,” but I do not think that Walt Whitman will be he. Browning will be placed upon a shelf unfrequented save by the clever purloiners of dead men’s thoughts, who will “adapt” his lucubrations to the literary fashion of a new era. Tyndall and Huxley will be forgotten as to their characteristic eccentricities, and remembered only, and honourably, for their indisputable contributions to real science. George Eliot will be read much as Sir Walter Scott is read now. She will scarcely have had time to attain to the classical dignity which the nineteenth century recognises in Fielding, and the comparative neglect with which it accompanies its recognition. I devoutly hope that Swinburne’s name and works shall have perished from the memory of a better and purer age. The old books shall still remain, growing, as is their nature, into deeper places in their

readers' hearts—and, as it is their nature, too, unfolding higher excellences and beauties that were hidden, as the thoughts of those who read them “are widened by the process of the suns.” There will still be culture, spurious and real, but, probably, both shall be as unlike the culture of to-day as modern costume is unlike the costume of our grandfathers. Meantime it is for us to work while it is yet day, mindful of the night that will come so surely, and mindful also of our responsibility to Him who shapes both day and night “to a perfect end.”

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### XIII.—JUDITH.

AH me! but Juda's harps are very sweet,  
And passing sweet the songs that link my name  
With strains that shall not die, but shall become  
A portion of the history of my race.

'Tis a proud thing to win a people's thanks,  
To shrine one's name within a people's hearts,  
And fix it unforgotten on their lips ;  
Proud to have wrought such deed as I have wrought,  
'That blazed, as lightning blazes from a cloud,  
Athwart the gloom that drap'd a nation's heart,  
And made the gloom one mass of light and fire ;  
Proud, to have snatched a name—a woman's name—  
From out the nameless host that pass obscure  
From birth, thro' happy motherland, to death,  
And leave no record, save in children's hearts,



No history save the whispers of one home,  
No mark to tell they ever were on earth,  
Save the light mound that lies upon their graves ;  
Proud, to have set my hand to such a deed  
As men shall talk of while the world shall last.

Proud thoughts are these, but ah ! not happy thoughts—  
Now that the wave upon whose crest I rode  
Has died to scarce heard ripple in my heart—  
Now that the sway of solitude has come,  
Now that the spell distill'd from people's praise  
Has loos'd its hold, and left me here alone.

Alone? Ah no, for Thou, my God, art here  
Within my heart, as near as in the hour  
When my weak hand undaunted took the sword  
And eternis'd my enemy's drunken sleep  
—The scene shall be before me till I die—  
I looked with loathing on my country's foe,  
Whose evil thoughts had pass'd to drunken dreams.  
And from such dreams, unmoor'd by my red hand,  
His guilty soul sailed into the great void  
Where Thou sat'st waiting on thy judgment-seat.

That my hand slew him I have no regret ;  
But what a load to lay on woman's heart !  
At too great price a woman buys renown ;  
And, when her name goes forth from her own doors,  
A host of troubles sit about her hearth.

My doom began the day Manasses died.  
I kept the house, preparing reaper's food,  
When one came running whose affrighted face

Left nought of evil for his tongue to tell.  
"We reap'd the barley, and the sun was hot  
Upon our lifted brows, when suddenly,  
With hand to head, Manasses gave a cry  
And fell, as stricken, on the barley sheaves ;  
And, when we lifted him, he never spoke,  
And the life left him ere I left the field."

Then with my widowhood began my doom.  
No more for me the simple dream of fame  
That Juda's mothers link with child of theirs  
"Messiah or Messiah's ancestor."  
No more for me the simple joys that fill  
The common round of Jewish womanhood  
Nor ever glance beyond the gates of home.  
I sate me in my grief and widow's weeds,  
And mourn'd my husband many heavy days ;  
And might have won from God by very tears  
The boon of quicker passage to the grave,  
Where, gathered to my husband and my sires.  
I might await the dawn of Israel's day.

But the time came when over all the land  
Flew rumour of a very present doom,  
Till it were shame that any private grief  
Should, 'midst the public trouble, lift its head.  
And when the women throng'd the public place  
To hear what Achior, lately come, could tell,  
My unfamiliar form mixed with the crowd  
And in my weeds, like grief personified,  
I walked, a living statue, thro' the streets.  
Then Achior in strange tongue from Gentile lips,  
As though he were a God-commissioned seer,

Spoke all our history in one pregnant word,  
Struck keynote from which whosoever will  
Can sing the song of Israel to its end :—  
“Faithless to God—earth’s weaklings worst the Jew;  
Faithful—on earth none strong enough to smite.”

Then my strange purpose rose within my breast,  
Was laid in prayer before the living God,  
Was planned—and all between that hour and this  
Is as a phase of some momentous dream.

With every deed done by a mortal hand,  
However great, however God-inspir’d,  
The taint of mortal hand is apt to mix ;  
And we, like slaves, however pure the wine  
Of inner aim we offer in the cup  
Of outward act, are prone to leave the soil  
Of a slave’s hand upon the cup we bear.

That my hand slew him I have no regret,  
Abhorrent as blood is to woman’s soul ;  
And I would bear that blood-stain on my hand  
Before the very judgment-seat of God.  
But ’tis my penance that, while men shall see  
The shining texture of the total web,  
They will not see the stains that lurk in folds  
Which conscience shall search out, till it forgets  
The glory in the shame that will not die.

Men prize success, and to desired ends  
Too easily condone unworthy means ;  
Nor do they deem it generous to bring  
Too nice a scrutiny to bear on deed

Of which they reap the profit. So, they praise,  
And praising each to other, make one voice  
That circles round the land and makes itself  
A second conscience—when the first would sting—  
That shields one, to his ultimate mischance,  
From healthful stings that keep the soul alive,  
Or even should it sleep well-nigh to death  
Or unto death itself, strike a new life  
That wakes it ere death passes into doom.

He was my country's foe—I lied to him  
And snared him, not with beauty of my face  
Alone—(that at his proper peril done  
Must needs but lightly lie upon my heart)—  
But with fair words that paltered with the sense—  
Words with two meanings, one upon my lips  
And one upon the ears that drank them in.

Our very best God needs not for his ends,  
Still less our evil ; and the soul that does  
A wrong that right may follow, little knows  
How base the wrong, the right how very fair

And for the part that human weakness mixed  
With work that was the very work of God,  
There must be penalty—and this shall be—  
Whereas my utmost longings were fulfilled  
If, while the flying backs of Israel's foes  
Struck on my sight, that sight had been my last—  
If, while the shouts of Israel's victory rang  
Upon my ears, my ears had closed in death.  
Now shall I live through many a lonely year  
To see my deed and me to history grow ;

And men shall call me great, and deem me great,  
But other thoughts than live on lips in words  
Shall nestle voiceless in their inmost hearts ;  
And women who may envy me my fame  
Shall grudge me not the doing of the deed  
From which my fame was born.

When I am old,  
And when my hand is weak, and white my head,  
They shall divine a fierceness in my eyes,  
And judge by all they heard, not all they see ;  
And they shall hedge my name and me with state,  
And make my face part of each festival ;  
But mothers who me, childless, shall proclaim  
Mother of Israel, yet shall shrink to lay  
Their innocent children on my widowed lap ;  
And innocent maids shall shudder secretly,  
And deem that blood, though justly shed, leaves stain  
Upon the hand that shed it, and deem too  
The deed that made me great left me unsexed.

By it shall I be known ; the woman's part  
In me shall be forgotten, or recalled  
To raise the strangeness of my manlike deed.  
Judith, who quailed not when her enemy's head  
Beneath her robe distill'd the gory drops,—  
Who struck not once but twice, and saved the head  
From off the wine-steeped carcass of its lord—  
Who wound with fearless footstep through the camp,  
And from the white lips of her enemy's head  
Forced voiceless angury of the morrow's fight :  
These shall men know !

But not the Jewish maid  
Who gave her young heart to her heart's young lord



And found the path of love and duty one,  
Leading her feet within Manasses' gates—  
Not her, who out of common household cares  
Made links to bind her to her husband's heart,  
Was joyful in his joys, and in her dreams  
Saw him in honour at the city gates  
With Judah's elders, nor could even dream  
Of any fame save what must come thro' him—  
Not her whose heart was soft and womanlike,  
So large that, like a hospitable house  
That shelters not alone the present guests  
But keeps a place for any guest God sends,  
Within that woman's heart she kept a place  
For children and grandchildren of her hope.

But never child of mine shall stroke my face,  
Nor touch those chords within my lonely heart  
That only baby fingers skill to touch.  
Thro' time to be, my child shall be my deed.

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#### XIV.—ABOUT KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD.

THERE is no kind of knowledge held in such universal estimation as knowledge of the world. Like most general phrases it has more than one meaning in the mouths of those who use it. I wish it to be understood in this paper in a wide, if not in its very widest sense, as signifying knowledge of men and of human nature. A man may have arrived at what he himself, giving a

personal application to a general principle, considers to be the "years of discretion," and he will admit, without any sense of shame, that there are many branches of knowledge, useful and ornamental, to the possession of which he can make no sort of pretension ; but he will be mortally ashamed to be thought to have failed in graduating in the university of the street and the market-place. Whatever else he knows or does not know, he claims, on the mere and often fallacious ground of having lived so long, to be a judge of men, a critic of human conduct, a subtle discerner of human spirits, an accurate reader in that book of which we hear so much—the book of the human heart.

And, in truth, the heart of man is a book ; nay, it is an encyclopædia of everything that has ever come within the range of its personal experience. It preserves an eternal record of all the stories in which it has played a part. It is strange what sad things may be hidden in its depths without giving any token of their existence. The heart may be gay, and may send the smile mantling to the face, but all the while you see only the topmost stratum. If the graves beneath were to give up their dead, the smiles would seem strangely out of place. It is just like this green earth of ours that renews itself year after year, and has not on its surface any token to tell what is the simple truth, that it has given graves to two hundred generations of human beings.

The heart, taking it in its widest sense, as the noblest part of man, holds fast everything with which it has come in contact. Nothing perishes. The most utterly forgotten things are only sleeping. A casual touch of any day circumstance may wake up memories of things

which, so far as consciousness was concerned, were so long dead that coming upon us now they seem like ghosts and startle us like ghosts. It is not only strange, it is even awful to think, that not a solitary experience, mental or physical; not a passing feeling that for a moment touched the heart-strings and died even as it uttered itself; not a sensation that lived in nerve or sinew or muscle; not a thought that ruffled, however lightly, the placid lake of consciousness, but are, each and all, hoarded up, readable, and to be read on some day to come. So there is more justification than ordinarily accumulates around figures of speech, for the figure that calls the heart of a man a book—nay, as I called it, an encyclopædia of personal experience—nay, as I proceed to call it, a whole library of the strangest and most varied character: so varied that no one but ourselves could imagine that one personal identity had presided over the collecting of the volumes.

However, there are books and books. General terms are admirable packing-cases for a multitude of ideas, but not everyone who possesses such a packing-case has ever examined it so as to be accurately cognisant of what it contains in detail. These general terms (to vary the figure) are corks to enable drowsy human intellects, clogged with fleshy encumbrances, to swim in the vast ocean of knowledge. Some day, perhaps, we shall, in the long aftertime to be, fling them aside as useless. Hearts are books; but, I repeat, there are books and books. There are books worth reading, and books which it is a loss of time to read, and books the reading of which mark an epoch in our intellectual history, and books which leave an evil taste upon the mental palate, and leave us worse than they found us.

So, too, is it in the matter of heart-books. Some, however voluminous, are mere pamphlets devoted to the petty interests of passing hours. One leaf is bound in with another, till they swell into a bulky volume, without a single unifying principle to make them worthy the name of a book. These are the records of make-shift lives, the flimsy reminiscences of men who, mentally and spiritually, lived from hand to mouth, each leaf of whose experience consorts with every other only on the ground that on the top of every leaf might be written in small capitals—SELF, SELF, SELF.

Other hearts are great folios devoted to world-wide interests, with great plates, and copious illustrations, and marginal notes made by many hands. Other hearts are slender octavos or duodecimos, with a name, or perhaps two names writ large upon the title-page, and all between that and the little woodcut of a tombstone on page the last, that bears inscribed the word "finis"—(which, strange as it may seem, holds in such contexts the meaning of the "beginning")—simple, uneventful, and, to the general public, not interesting. That is, to the general public of this world under the sun : for, to readers in the world beyond the stars, these uneventful lines may be as interesting as any.

Do I suppose that there are such readers as these latter to whom I have referred? Well, I answer, why should there not be? We mortals feel an intelligent interest in worlds beneath us—nay, there are some who boast of it as if it were a glory, that they are interested in nothing else. "Science" potters about in the mud and in the dust, and busies itself amongst pre-Adamite fossils and the *debris* of preparatory worlds, and reads a story in a shell, or a bone, or a lump of earth. Why

should not the scientific researches of higher intelligences than ours be directed to lives that are, after all, nearer akin to their own than dead matter is to our immortal spirits? And I believe that there have been lives lived upon this planet, which some human critics would call uneventful, and more utterly unsuccessful, that have drawn happy tears from angels' eyes, and almost satisfied an angel's ideal.

One of the consequences of digression is that from time to time you must repeat key-notes: Accordingly I repeat—these little octavos and duodecimos are uneventful, and to the general public not interesting: for the general public does not care overmuch for our particular selves. It seems a truism when it is written down, but to many persons it is not only not a truism, but it does not strike them as a truth to the very end of their lives, and they come to the very edge of the grave in the vigorous enjoyment of the inveterate habit of thinking that others care as much about them as they care about themselves. And in such cases *that* is not a little.

However, people who have any moral stamina survive the delusion. In the early portion of their lives, when the grass is green in the pastures of youth, and flowers are frequent in the grass, they may be "hail fellow" with chance passers, and be in the habit of divining the ultimate possibilities of friendship in the last new acquaintance; but before the grass grows yellow, and the leaves get sere upon the tree of life, they begin to have their doubts, and not a vestige of the delusion lives unto the aftermath.

So much about the instruments by which knowledge of the world is acquired. They are ubiquitous; and



perhaps that is the chief reason why most people think that knowledge of the world is of easy acquirement. But it does not follow. I have known many instances of a strange delusion common enough amongst people who deal with books—the delusion that possession and power of use of a book are synonymous with possession of the knowledge which the book contains. When I was a student—I mean in the technical sense, for in the wide sense of the word I am a student still, and hope to be, not merely to the end of life, but through all time to come—I remember fellow-students who were assiduous in their inquiries about the best authors on given subjects, procured them at great expense, deposited them upon their book-shelves, made little or no use of them, *and* imagined that the payment of the purchase-money ought to have made the knowledge as much their intellectual possession as it made the book their material property. Others there were who had a marvellous knowledge of the libraries: but they were so ambitious of knowing a great deal about the outside of the books that they never had any time to spare for the cultivation of the inside. So a man may know men for years, heart-book after heart-book may pass through his hands, but he may know only the covers and the title-pages, and may be profoundly unacquainted with the contents of the records. Indeed there is nothing harder than to read even the simplest seeming hearts. In one of these volumes that seem easy reading you will come suddenly upon a passage as hard to decipher as any Egyptian hieroglyphic. Strange, too, how the writing of different stages becomes *cryptograph* to a man himself. It is undoubtedly his hand, but he has quite forgotten what it meant once.

Things written there in the most absolutely indelible ink grow strange and lose half or all their meaning when they are read through the haze of intervening years. There are whole pages, nay, whole chapters of life's first volume that are written in a language that age has quite forgotten. And even if age, under some strong impulse, were to attempt a translation, it would be apt to sound to age's own ears as utter nonsense. Age is not over fond of translating. It has new versions of its own, some of them doleful enough. Is there a sadder sight in life than that, which may be seen sometimes, of an old man sitting amid the ruins of ignoble purpose and the wrecks of base design, chewing the cud of bitter experience, to which time has brought no sweetness, racked with the heart-pain for which the world has no anodyne, and preaching to his grandchildren the lessons of crafty caution and cold distrust of men that have made him what he is?

The past of most lives is like some dead city buried beneath the dust of ages and beneath the buildings of a more recent city. I remember, when I was in Rome, nothing used to strike me more than the fact, easy enough of proof in such spots as the forum of Trajan, that the streets through which I walked were at least thirty feet above the streets in which the ancient Romans did their business and took their pleasure. Men dig down now and strike upon the ruins of a buried past—on broken columns and forgotten tombs, on the traces of some temple world-famous once, on the fragment of a statue that once stood proudly up to tell the story of some memorable deed, of which the world has long since lost the memory; on a palace, on a garden, on a mosaic pavement. These things were

made strong to last for ever ; beautiful to deserve immortality ; but the hand of time wields the hammer of an iconoclast : its touch is heavy, its grasp relentless, and they perished one by one. Their ruins only remain, and above them have been built new homes of new generations.

So is it with some lives. The golden city of their lost youth lies buried beneath the accumulated experience of many a long year. A new city has been built far different from the old. But at times memory is busy and digs down, and brings to the light of later days the faded glories of our youth. The tombs, where dead hopes moulder and dead purposes lie buried—the dreams that fled, the promises that belied themselves, the shattered idols that once seemed like gods, that at first were mutely mourned, then hidden away and forgotten. The purposes of life have changed and its thoughts. Old feelings have lost their keenness and their glow. A new city has been built above the old ; but believe me there is not a structure, stately or mean, but has its foundation in some fragment of the ruined city of the past.

It is strange, and as sad as it is strange, that in the common estimation knowledge of the world means, and means exclusively, knowledge of the worst part of the world, of the *seamy* side of men and things. Such an old man as I have described above will be regarded as a “past master” in the craft. The bitter knowledge of the cynic who has never risen to the level that would bring within his horizon the lofty motive that redeemed disaster, and made a glory out of a mistake, and the serene patience and heroic self-sacrifice that ennobled unsuccess—this, forsooth, shall be known and held in

high esteem as knowledge of the world! No, say I, the world is not so bad as that. There must have been multitudes of men better than the cynic ever knew or the world would not have lasted until now. As men who have it not in them to be authors turn critics, so the *faineants* of the world turn into *censores morum* and cynics. But *faineants* alone, were the world composed of such, would not keep human society together for a day. The cynic has been deplorably unfortunate in the people he has known; but like attracts like, and the chances are that his misfortune, besides being deplorable, is also deserved.

There are men who, without being quite cynics, have yet been cursed with a tendency to criticise, that has quite overborne any feebler tendency to admire that might have been originally a part of their intellectual outfit. They have an eye for blots, a nose for mistakes, an instinctive appreciation of weak points. Let a book be nearly perfect, yet they are engrossed with a sense of some little failure in good taste, which a kindlier critic might indeed see, but would scorn to notice. Show them a great work of art—well, it is just a little out of drawing. Place a hero before them—before being a hero, it was necessary that he should be a man, and perhaps there was some human weakness that only endears his memory to more genial hearts; but what can the semi-cynic do but point the finger of scorn. Even nature cannot satisfy him. Mountains are a little too high or a little too low. Scenery wants this or that to be quite perfect. Switzerland is overrated—it is never done raining in Killarney—Niagara is not within some few feet of being so high as people imagine, and so on. And the worst of it is, that, truth compels me to admit,

they are usually correct from their own point of view—but all the same, their point of view is simply detestable.

I think it would be doing no small service to men to enforce the protest against the notion that knowledge of the world means only or principally knowledge of the evil that is in it; protest against the very common idea embodied in the advice not unfrequently on the lips of would-be instructors in the science: "If you want to know human nature, go to the police-courts or to the hulks," or to some other of those un-happy schools where all the examples take the negative shape of warnings. Now, I submit that there are sundry other places, not less accessible, but more, such as the ordinary homes of honest people, which have, to say the least, an equal claim to be fairly representative of average human nature, and where example may probably stimulate to imitation.

Besides the course which I reprobate seems to me (to abstract from all higher considerations) a mistake in tactics. It is not a good thing, even from a selfish point of view, to deal with men in general, as if you had the lowest possible opinion of their deserts, such as you may pick up in the kennels and gutters of great cities. As a simple matter of fact, there must have been multitudes of men better than the bad men you may have chanced upon. For my part, in dealing with men, I have always found a high opinion of them a more effective instrument than a low one. Praise fits many more human locks than blame, and opens the way far more readily into those good parts of character which even very bad men sometimes have. It is much better to expect that a man will do his duty, or at any rate *seem* to expect it, than to show any unreasonable



suspicion that he will neglect it. Confidence begets fidelity, and want of confidence often goes a far way to create its own justification. If you want to make a man a rascal, take it for granted, and let him see you do, that he has in him the making of a rascal. And, remember, a man may have in him latent possibilities of rascality that will never come to anything, if this be not developed by such evil culture as I have indicated. A man often shapes his life according to the foregone conclusions which his intelligent neighbours have formed about it. This is eminently true of young persons, and it is for this reason that I am inclined to think that Mr. Worldly Wiseman, or Messrs. the Cynic and the Scoffer, are worse companions for a boy than even what I may call an honestly wicked person.

Most people like praise, indeed many more than deserve it. But when it is at all deserved, it is rarely injurious. Many people have an unreasonable fear of administering it; it is part of the puritanical dislike for anything that is agreeable—to others. When it is really deserved, most people expand under it into richer and better selves. I have seen natures starved for want of just a little of it. Say a word of praise whenever you honestly can, and that is oftener than most people seem to imagine. It falls on the seed of good purpose like the sunshine, like the rain, like the dew, like anything that fertilises; and long after you have forgotten the words that cost you so little, they will have helped to ripen a harvest, from the sheaves of which many a hungry heart will be fed.

When a man thinks he is reading the character of another, he is often unconsciously betraying his own; and this is especially the case with those persons whose

knowledge of the world is of such sort that it results in extreme distrust of men. This is most certain in that meanest department of personal criticism—the attribution of low motive. It is a favorite weapon with those whose cause is so bad that it scarcely admits of any other ; but no really high-minded man is ever seduced into its use under the smart of even the most undoubted grievance. It is grounded on a lie—namely, that one man can with certainty discern another man's motives. But if a man cannot do that, there is another purpose which he serves with scientific precision by the attribution of motive. It is, to furnish an unerring measure of his own moral nature, an unfailing test of his own character. Perhaps you have sometimes dreamt that you were reading out of some book, and that everything you read was new and strange. But all the time it could only have been the genuine product of your own mental machinery. So, when people set themselves to read other people's character by the light of motives which they divine, they are but uttering their own innermost selves. "The reason he did that was this ——" Well, it may by possibility be so ; but there is one thing that is more than possible, and it is, that such a motive as you have imagined would be apt to be the main-spring of your own action in a similar matter.

Yet, I find in general that the knowledge of the world most in vogue is knowledge acquired by this method of procedure—never to admit a high motive where a low one can possibly be conjectured. Take Rochefoucauld for your *vade mecum*, and nothing in human character will be a mystery to you, except the problem as to how human character ever produced anything great or noble. And, ten chances to one, you

will soon proceed to solve that problem, or rather to eliminate it, by looking upon it as grounded on unverified hypothesis. Indeed, those who deal in satire are not competent judges of men. Not to them would I go for opinion or advice. Their minds and their pens have contracted an undue bias. They see nothing but things that lend themselves to satire. Horace was a *persifleur*—Juvenal, if he had had the power, would have been a worse fanatic than one of Cromwell's Ironsides.

It is with knowledge of the world as it is with knowledge of large cities. Men most largely acquainted with the latter are, after all, acquainted only with certain phases of the manifold life that is lived in them. There are whole tracts unexplored by even the policeman and the philanthropist.

Few cities strike one so forcibly as Paris at the very first sight. Civilization there seems to be in full flower, if not indeed advanced to the further stage of running to the seed, which produces from time to time such portentous harvests. I saw it last just before the storm of war burst upon France. Everything was gay, everything smiling. To a superficial observer, such as I confess I was, there was every appearance of stability about the then existing order of things. It seemed the easiest thing in the world to know Paris. Gay boulevards, crowded cafés, gardens in full bloom, official vigilance ubiquitous and producing the perfection of order in public places. These were on the surface. The moral filth, if such there were, was carefully kept to its own sewers, ought of sight. To a stranger Paris was delightful. Everything, or almost everything, that could delight the eye could be seen for nothing and bought

for money. Of course, too, the stranger, would be apt to think it was the most worldly of all cities. If ever there was a vanity fair, there it was in those piping days of peace. Manifest worldliness, probable, nay, certain crime—such might well have been the knowledge of Paris which a stranger might have carried away with him in the days before the war. But if the casual visitor while parading one of the busiest streets—the Rue de Bac—were to turn aside, as I did often, into a quiet court-yard, over which was written the modest inscription, “Missions Etrangères,” he would enlarge his knowledge of Paris in a direction that would give him better hope for Paris and for France than any he could gather from boulevard or café, or even from the uproar of the Bourse or the eloquence of the Chamber. On entering he would be shown into a modest parlour on the right, and while waiting he would, probably, in the absence of a view of the street, employ himself in examining a set of plain portraits hung round the walls, in number, when I saw them, exactly twenty-four. They are all in clerical costume, and are, to a stranger, as like each other as if they were brothers. And, in truth they are brothers, in a sense higher than could be conveyed by any tie of human relationship. Though not akin to each other, there is a “bond of blood” between them. Once they were students in this college. They grew from youth to manhood, from grace to grace within these quiet walls, within earshot of the street-cries of Paris. Cherishing a high unworldly purpose, an ambition that would have seemed madness to the streets outside, they passed the quiet years. One by one they went away, never to see the dear old college any more. And some day from China

or Japan, came the news to those they left behind, that the little boys who had grown to youth and manhood under the fostering care of Alma Mater, in the Rue de Bac, that had so short a time ago sent them with a blessing from her doors, had, in heathen lands beyond the sea, shed their blood for Christ. Yes, these twenty-four were martyr children of the house ; and, I can say from personal experience, that it gives one a strange thrill to have brought home to one so forcibly an idea that had hitherto touched one as an abstract possibility, or, if at all, as a concrete fact, yet so far beyond the range of personal experience that, to all intents and purposes, it remained practically abstract. But there was more to come. On the opposite side was the Salle des Martyrs—and there you could see relics—mementoes of martyr students of the house—some, whose martyrdom was so recent that the blood had scarcely faded on the vestments, and the bamboos and the *cangues* ;—so recent, that it touched me to the quick when I was told that the coverings of some of the coffers that held the precious remains of more than one martyr had been embroidered by the hands of still living mothers and sisters of the saints. I had the happiness, once, of witnessing the departure of six newly ordained missionaries. There was a solemn Benediction in the little chapel, and an appropriate sermon, and then the young men sate on the altar, and priest and student came up and kissed reverently the feet that had elected to walk through thorny ways, on every step of which sudden and violent death would lie in wait. All the time the choir kept chanting—“ How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things”—and I can aver



that the words have had for me since that day a more specific meaning than ever they had before. Friends, mothers, and sisters were there, weeping tears half sorrowful, but wholly happy. But when all was done, these six young men walked straight from the altar with the kisses warm on their feet, and uttering not a syllable of earthly farewell to any earthly friend, they mounted the carriage that was to convey them away, and were seen no more : indeed, never to be seen again in the flesh till the great day when all shall be seen. And, in the meantime, any day at all, their souls may be in heaven long before their garments or their bones come back to dear France, and to the old House that fed and taught them. There were at the time of which I speak more than one hundred students, many of whom I had the happiness of counting among my friends ; and it was characteristic of them and of their college, that when we came to part with mutual regrets, and mutual requests of remembrances in prayer, the one cry from each and all was—"Pray that God may give us the grace of martyrdom."

Now, I reckon all that as an important element of my knowledge of Paris ; and, I think, if men were more accustomed than they are to dwell upon the good qualities they have found in men, their knowledge of the world would result in something better than cynicism. It would no longer be that evil knowledge that blossoms into scorn, the acquiring of which is like sowing salt, that not only produces no crop, but renders the soil for ever barren.

These memories have brought about a more than usually serious mood, and having been wrought into such mood I cannot think it out of place to close this

paper with a remembrance of One who, as in other things, so also in knowledge of the world and of the human heart, surpassed all the children of men. Who knew men as He knew them? He lived their life in its every stage. He would, at the world's first Christmas time, steal into the hearts of men in a form that not the most hardened could reject—the form of a child. He would be born of a woman. He would lie helpless in the arms of a human mother. He would lay his lips on hers, would nestle close to her bosom, would stretch his hands to her with the common instinct of all the baby children of Adam, would look up into her face, and take the law of infancy, as children take it, from a mother's eyes and from a mother's lips. He grew from babyhood to childhood, and boyhood, and youth, and manhood, gaining every day experimental knowledge of human feelings. And what was the result of his knowledge? It resulted, as all true knowledge is meant to result, in love. As none knew men better, so none ever loved them more. This is what has made his human character fascinating, even to those who are so unfortunate as not to believe in his divinity.

He never overlooked a virtue to fasten on a weakness. He had an eye for good points in the most unpromising subjects. He it was who lifted his eyes above the surging crowd and spied Zacheus in the tree by the wayside. A sordid occupation could not hide from Him Matthew's fitness for the Apostolate. The scorn of self-righteous men only served to enhance the value of Magdalen's hot tears of penitence. He humbled to the dust in which He wrote their crimes the double-minded accusers of the sinful woman. Even when

the film of death was gathering fast across his eyes, He discerned fitness for heaven's glory in the reckless waif of Jewish society who had been a murderer and a thief.

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### XV.—ABOUT LIFE.

IT is not without a certain amount of deliberateness that I usually select for these papers very general titles. It is my purpose to give myself room—to make provision for any number of thoughts that may happen to present themselves—to lay the ground-plan so large that any kind of mansion may be erected upon it. To be sure, my plan has its own inconveniences, and they are such as will forcibly strike a not uncommon class of minds. Vagueness of title leads to vagueness of treatment, thoughts therefrom resulting move in very irregular curves; nothing is proved, nothing directly taught. But, I submit, I am not bound to teach anyone. There are teachers enough in all conscience to let people of my turn enjoy a different vocation. There is scarcely any obligation that need press so lightly in these days as the obligation of setting up to teach the world. Then as to vagueness of treatment. Well, *suum cuique*. Pure intellect usually advances in straight lines, secures behind it every position, and makes its advances with syllogistic pomp. But the intellect, great as are the uses it subserves, is, after all, but a small part of the very composite being called man; and it is not *it* that secures, nor, I add, ought to secure the

largest share in the interest that one man bestows upon another. "*Homo sum, et nil humani a me alienum puto*" has been a million times quoted, thereby vindicating its claim to a place among the common thoughts of men. But might I be permitted to vary on the well-worn theme, I would say thus: "*Homo sum, et nil mei ab homine alienum puto.*" I am a man, and consequently nothing of mine but may prove interesting to other men. I have with the race the bond of a common nature, and so far from the pleading of that bond being a mark of presumption, I think on the other hand that it would be the height of impudence in me, or in any man, to consider himself so different from his fellow-men as that he should expect to reach them through any other medium.

Now most of the things and thoughts that interest men may find a place in a talk about life. Life is the thing that we all have in common. In whatever else one man may differ from another, in this we are all alike, that in some way or other, we all live. Most people have the wish, most diversely coloured according to the quality of the knowledge from which it springs, to make the most of their lives. But not to speak of the cases which, measured by lofty standards, are simple failures worthily to realise any such wish, it is certain that, judged even by their own deliberately selected standards, most lives are more or less failures. They had the wish to make the most of it, but they have not succeeded. Life was too hurried a business to permit any adequate adjustment of means to ends. They had glimpses, by some sort of intermittent intellectual moonlight, of the straight road to the desired end. But one thing or another drew them aside into

by-paths—some one plucked them by the sleeve and suggested that on one side or on the other there was something that it was necessary to do—that done, they might begin to live. But somehow either that was never so done as to give them leisure for the real work of living, or, if it were done, other somethings started up importunate by the wayside, and life became a very puzzle of blind by-paths leading no-whither. And in the end these good folk get tired, and perhaps sit down with folded hands to wait for the great dawn that will not find them here.

Life is the common possession, but it comes to men under very different guises, so different that it hardly seems to mean the same thing to one man and to another. I do not intend to dwell upon differences that are only skin deep, such as those that arise from rank and wealth. Beneath every skin—however variously coloured, or with whatever diverse histories written over, you will find—a man—a human body giving a home to a human soul. In this all men are the same—but men are not, so far as one can see, equally weighted in the race of life. This very body of ours has not been made so absolutely for us that it altogether began to be when it was wanted for our use. It has come to us through human generations that have left upon it legible marks of their passing, nay, that have left on it, to eyes that were qualified to read them, whole histories of lives long gone. Bethink you what a difference it makes to a man whether the body with which he begins life is healthy or not; whether it has come to him with only the common motions of the race written upon it, or whether it hoards up in the form of predispositions memories of special habitudes imposed



upon it ages ago. These may not be able to touch the inner soul, certainly are not able to destroy the imperial sovereignty of the will, but most assuredly they will do battle for a home in the new individual in whom they find themselves located. The body is something to the soul that cannot be adequately expressed under the formula—"as the clothes to the body, so the body to the soul." There is a subtle interpenetration, the laws of which have not yet been ascertained, but over which it is necessary to believe man's royal will presides with a sway which no disinterested judge will call into question.

The "*corpus sanum*" is, then, a preliminary element of great value in the life of a man—not only a body organically sound, but, if I may so speak, instrumentally sound. For the body is, in most things, the instrument of the soul. It has communication with the soul, and it is of the last importance that the channels of communication be duly open. Now, it seems certain that these may, to some extent at any rate, be clogged without the obstruction or its situation revealing itself to the keenest tests which the physiologist has yet been able to apply. A man is mad—surely his soul is not mad. A child develops into an idiot: his soul is at no time idiotic. In the case of decided madness or idiocy skilled experts say that physical lesion can almost always be discovered. But there are cases less decided, ranging through many degrees, where no such lesion is discoverable by mortal instruments. Perhaps it is true that not only "*semel insanivimus omnes*:" "we have all been mad once," but that every man is a little mad on some point or other. A little tiny pebble has lodged itself at some point of intercommunication, and

ruffled, to an extent more or less perceptible, the man's whole nature.

Assuredly the sound body is devoutly to be wished for, but it cannot be originally acquired by any striving of our own. Indeed, we are beyond our own control in matters anterior to the possession of any body at all. The most fundamental of all pre-requisites to life is to be born at all, and it is settled without us. Settled, too, are the country and the climate and the social condition and the general and particular circumstances into which we are born. All these things, however, quite beyond the control of the individual whom they so much concern, are, not merely the foundation on which character is to be built, but the soil from which character is to grow, and as such, have their inevitable influence upon leaves and flowers and fruit.

So that, long before we are born, many more threads of circumstance than we can even imagine had gone to make the groundwork on which *we*, having at length arrived, "*per varios casus per tot discrimina rerum*," through so many risks indeed that a full knowledge of them would give us palpitation of the heart, are to paint in the picture of our earthly destiny. Then, as I said, we come, first, into the possession of a body. It is a small affair enough at first,—but do not despise it. Small as it is, it has won its way into existence by a fight protracted for many ages. Besides its various organs it has a general condition which physiologists call temperament; and this temperament may have been, and probably was determined by antecedent physical conditions that had place in remote ages past. Now who has ever been able to estimate the part played by mere temperament in the history of any human

being? This body, being such as it is, is intimately bound up with the soul, and has an appreciable influence on that soul. The nature of this influence, and the mode of its exercise, may be a mystery, but the influence itself is open, at all times, to experimental test.

When we come to speak of the soul, we tread upon more dangerous ground. It is not easy to express even what we seem to ourselves to know, because the language in which we must seek to express it has taken so much of its colouring from the physical organs through which it flows, has been so saturated with relations to things material, that, applied to a soul, it is inevitably on the one side or the other of perfect truth and perfect accuracy. In anything I say, or seem to say, on this head, let me have the benefit of the modifying influence of this indisputable fact. Does it not, then, seem as if something in the soul were inherited too? Family traits of mind as well as of body run down through generations. Certain habits of soul that any individual has, seem to have been formed in the course of more than one life. I do not mean to say that the soul is derived from parents in anything like the same sense in which the body is; but that mental and moral features of soul are, in some sort, transmitted, will fall in with the experience of anyone who has lived long enough to have had personal knowledge of more than one generation of the same family. Indeed I have often thought that, if the life of some keen observer were in our days to be prolonged to the prediluvian standard, he would pass for a magician or a prophet; so much light would the past throw upon the future where so large a past had concentrated itself in one intelligence.

All this is difficult to trace in individuals because we know comparatively little of their inner life *in itself*; and in their case the time has not yet come when inner life could be read *in its results*, as it assuredly could when the results would have had time to develop themselves fully. This is the very just reason why common sense and right feeling are so extremely jealous of any attempt to deal scientifically with individual free intelligence. But common sense abandons that jealousy when the range of observation is so extended as to give full swing to the law of averages. When it comes to a question of *races*, the transmission not merely of physical but of non-physical characteristics seems beyond all question. Now I am inclined to think that if a sufficiently high intelligence, say, an angel of the higher choirs, were scientifically to examine a newly-born child, and bring to bear the acuteness of his spiritual vision upon the conditions of its existence, he could divine its future life with a very high degree of probability. Nor do I think that this divination, however high might be the degree of its probability, would be a difficulty precisely against the orthodox doctrine of free-will. It would be a difficulty against quite another thing, namely, our ability to understand or explain the operation of free-will. But to me, at any rate, the difficulty ~~is~~ there in any case; for, while nothing is so simply or so forcibly brought home to me as that I have free-will, few things are more mysterious to me than the mode of its operation; few things less capable of explanation than how that erratic line finds its place through the uninterrupted order that seems to reign over everything that God has created. So, for myself, I may say, I have never been in anywise troubled by

the formidable array of facts brought forward by those who would fain treat history scientifically. They hardly increase by one iota a difficulty with which I was familiar before ever I heard them—namely, *how* a man is free; but, as I have derived the knowledge of his freedom not from facts external to myself, but from consciousness, the doctrine stands upon an elevation which no possible accumulation of such facts can ever reach.

Having a body and a soul, it is next of the last importance into what sort of training they are put. There are educational moulds of all sorts, and not one of them, good or bad, but does its work. Here again is a matter in which we have, personally, little or no choice. Hence, take any grown man, and there are quite a number of things, beyond the range of his largest ken, that must necessarily qualify his individual responsibility.

It would pain me beyond what words could express, that anyone should for a moment imagine that I wish to say anything that would be calculated to weaken in the simplest soul the great sense of responsibility, which I take to be in the moral world what gravitation is in the physical. A man is not his body, nor his soul alone, nor is a man his circumstances. He is an individual made up of these and modified by the conditions of his existence. But being what he is, he is such a man as no one but himself ever was, or ever will be. No right-minded man will be ever led from considerations derived from conditions *outside* his inner conscious self, to shirk the responsibility that his personality has brought with it. Nor do I believe that any man ever initiated a course of evil doing by a denial of his personal responsibility. He was bad through many degrees before



he came *to that*. It was not a motive but an after-thought.

But my design in all I have been saying is a very practical one. We know what is good and what is evil. The broad principles of right and wrong stand out so clearly in the soul and in the world, that unless a man wilfully shut his eyes he cannot fail to see them. No one will ever, by subtlest argument, be juggled out of this knowledge. We know, or the theologians can tell us, what a "human act" (the sole matter of human responsibility) is and presupposes. But when we have with scientific precision laid down our moral theories, we must always add, on the principal of the immortal Bunsby—(a principle, which, to my mind, fully justifies Captain Cuttle's belief in the philosophic character of his friend)—"the bearings of this observation lays in the application on it, that ain't no part of our duty awast then, keep a bright look out for'ard, and good luck to you."

To be serious; in these matters personal application of principle belongs in the last resort to Him who alone has sufficient knowledge to guarantee correctness of application—that is, to God. For us, mortals, when it comes to the judging of any single act of another—or even of our own—it is the case of Shylock over again. Whatever rights we may claim in the subject of the act, nay, whatever knowledge of theological anatomy we may possibly possess, we cannot hope to cut away our pound of flesh neither more nor less; nor can we hope to cut it away without shedding blood which it was not in our bond to shed. Hence, my most practical conclusion is this—it is not only the most uncharitable, but the most audacious and most unjustifiable of

all acts, to sit in judgment upon the life of any fellow-mortal. Of course I do not mean that men are not sometimes called upon by their office to pronounce judgment upon particular acts, nor do I intend to convey that what is manifestly right or manifestly wrong is not to be called by its proper name; but I do mean that where judgment is not an act of office, it is in nine cases out of ten an act of presumption, and that even where judgment is lawful it can never, when exercised by a mere mortal, go so far as to accurately determine the *degree* of guilt, or the precise *amount* of responsibility incurred by particular acts of particular men.

So from the depths of the metaphysical ocean into which I have been diving, I emerge to the surface with one pearl of great price, which, indeed, I might more easily have found, where all such pearls are, on the very surface of the Gospel. It is this: "Judge not."

Having life given to us, it is the greatest of all occupations to manage it rightly. Nor does the greatness depend so much upon the external dignity or humanly-estimated importance of the life to be managed, as upon success in managing it rightly such as it may happen to be. Each one has his life, his little foothold between two eternities, by a title that none can gainsay. Let him make the most of it, remembering always that the successful management of two talents got exactly the same commendation, and in precisely the same words, as the management of five. There is this advantage in the lowly, uneventful lives that fall to the lot of the great bulk of mankind, that one can make more sure that they are rightly ordered. It is a problem whether Julius Cæsar or Napoleon Buonaparte more served or injured mankind. Debate and settle it how

you will. But there is no problem at all as to whether the man who has tilled the rugged soil and coaxed the furrow into fruitfulness, has been a benefactor to his race. But these are lowly services compared to those which even the men who spend their lives at them can render in nobler orders. What a noble service a man does to the world by sending into it to avert the peril of a preponderance of evil, a well-reared family. How a man purifies the moral atmosphere around him by rightly ordering his personal concerns both as they affect himself and as they bear relation to his neighbours. Nay, even a single good word or kindly deed, or the frown that shames an evil speaker into unwonted modesty, may have harvests richer than have come from any great man's deed that is gathered into the pages of Plutarch.

You, young man or maiden, complain that you have no sphere worthy of your budding powers, no scope for the energies with which your youth is rich. What a mistake! Go out in the morning of any single day, and do the simple common offices that fit themselves to your hand almost in spite of yourself, and you shall at night come home, though home mean only a cabin, laden with spoils, if invisible yet not less real, and far more precious than the spoils of wealth that the far East has yielded to adventurous spirits, or the spoils of knowledge that the patient industry of the scholar has won from ponderous tomes.

Nothing is great in itself, it is only the doing of it that makes it great; and to such greatness the commonest actions lend themselves equally as the rarest of human achievements.

Ordinary men see only the superficial outlines of a

new country. It needs the eye of the engineer to divine its latent capabilities for commerce, or the eye of a practised miner to discern the treasure that hides beneath the surface. So, too, it is only the instructed eye that can conjecture the vast possibilities of ordinary life. The finest faculties may spend themselves, nor complain of being wasted, upon the duties of a common day. Intellect may find its work—and it has none in kind nobler—in discerning simple ends and adjusting to them adequate means. Will can exert itself quite as forcibly, and, so far as we are personally concerned, quite as profitably in the street or in the workshop, as in the battlefield or the senate. Or are you fool enough to think that God cares for mere results? Could He not have them without you, as many as He pleased? But what He will not have without you is the nice workmanship which your human personality can lavish upon that rough material of everyday life from which all results are born. What did those care for mere gold who employed Benvenuto Cellini? They had enough and to spare. At all events they did not expect from him that he should make it more. But his cunning hand gave it values hitherto undreamt of. We, you and I, and all, are God's artists, working as the case may be, in gold, or brass, or ivory, or common clay—no matter, there is no material so common that genius cannot transfigure it with beauty. Now the genius of right acting is, if he will but use it, in the possession of every moral agent.

Nothing is more difficult than to give rules for the management of life. Cases are so different that rules will not equally apply. Besides, a rule, to be of any worth, ought to be the outgrowth of one's own character

and circumstances. The most anyone can do is to indicate rules which he himself may have found beneficial, and the chances are that he is not so exceptional a human being as that others will not find his experience of use to themselves. However, it is such a delicate matter, and we are all so prone to imagine ourselves, without sufficient grounds, born legislators—for others—that I shall, and that with great diffidence, indicate only one very general rule. It seems to me to be a good rule—to live each day for the day. It is quite as much as the wisest of us can manage commodiously. Indeed nature seems to give us a hint in this direction by giving even our single days in infinitesimally minute instalments. Of course I do not mean that an occasional retrospect and an intelligent onlook are things to be neglected. But I do say that, at any given time, our chief business is to manage the day that we have. We may sentimentalise about the past or speculate about the future, but always we deal only with an everflowing present.

But we grasp at shadows. No present, however rich in possibilities, is enough to content our lofty, and, I add, our lazy ambition. We are fools of time at both extremities of life. When we are young we are dupes of the future from whence come songs falser and more fatal than the songs of the Sirens. In age we are slaves of the past, and sometimes it is a bondage very bitter and hard to bear. We have spent our wealth and used our gifts—but it was said of old, “the gods give nothing without a price,” and we pay penalty long before we die. Cords of our own twisting are round our limbs and have eaten to the bone. There is nothing to be done but wait for death.



Dupes of the future, slaves of the past, I know not which condition is farther removed from real wisdom. "Carpe diem" is a good motto, nor need it have the Epicurean colouring that discredits it. Not in wine but in wisdom, not with garlands of flowers that wither, but with wreaths that will keep their lustre to all eternity, may the day be put to use.

What a grand thing it is to be young—to have all the world before us, and within us the upspringing energy that seems capable of everything. But not everyone who has a treasure has the wisdom to put it to proper use. Youth looks about—thinks the time for real doing has not come yet—and lavishes its priceless wealth of time and energy upon a day-dream. But—"sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"—and the good is sufficient too, if you only do it. It is your present business to do the present good, even though God means you to do better things by-and-by. Indeed the obligation of doing good, in some sort, is so universally acknowledged that no one would be willing to admit that his life was utterly worthless. The worst man, and the most incapable will plume himself on being good for something or other. Not the apostle only, but nature and society cry out—"If any man will not work, neither let him eat." And even though he does, as indeed he sometimes does, contrive to eat without working, yet an avenging dyspepsia dogs him from the table. Youth, at all events, is not slow to admit the obligation of doing good in the world.

In truth, the danger lies for youth in the extreme of not thinking highly enough of the good that is at its hand to do, but stretching forward in imagination to fairer and loftier things than circumstances have yet

brought within its reach. There are those who are not satisfied with the good they might be doing for themselves and for their families, but will entertain lofty projects of doing good to society, to their town, or their county, or their native land, or the whole human race. It is found especially in youth, and it is a noble and a graceful thing in youth, that when a young man, standing upon the threshold of the world in whose work he is about to take a part, sees the many wrong and hateful and unjust things that are being daily done under the sun, he feels the heart within him expanding with a love of justice and a hatred of oppression; and he will, at any rate, glow with the desire to raise up the oppressed and to do battle for the fallen, and to hasten by the shout of his mouth, and if need and opportunity were, by the stroke of his right hand, the reign of justice in this weary world. It is a grand spring-tide of sentiment—and none but one who was never capable of the feeling that fuses honesty into heroism, will scoff at the unthinking enthusiasm of those who have not yet convinced themselves that injustice and wrong will touch upon the very dawn of the day of doom. It is, I say, a noble feeling that stirs the blood in generous young hearts. But it has its danger. It is this that so often throws young men into the hands of colder and more crafty spirits, who, professing a sympathy they are incapable of feeling, with the aspirations of youthful enthusiasm in which they are skilled to traffic, seek to use its unsuspecting ardour for the furtherance of selfish ends and dangerous designs.

There are always men, and in those latter years they are numerous and noisy, who single themselves out from their fellow-men, and proclaim that they have

some great plan to set the whole world right. And their clap-trap professions too often cajole the young and the unwary; for youth, though mostly honest, is often foolish, and lies at the mercy of the crafty brain and the flattering tongue. To such young men, ardent, unselfish, enthusiastic, who, with their beautiful illusions and their impracticable dreams, are the salt of the present, and the hope of the future; who feel their hearts hot with indignation at the wrongs which they see or have imagined; who long to rush into the press of battle, and make the bad world good by very force and compulsion—to such, could I assemble them around me, I would speak thus:

“The feeling that prompts you is a noble feeling. Hate injustice and wrong as much as you will; never can you too much hate them. You want to make the bad world good—it is a noble wish; cherish it as you cherish the apple of your eye. But remember this, each of you. Your voice is weak, and your arm is not far-reaching, and you may strike and shout till strength and voice be gone, and very little impression will you make on the large world that lies outside your father’s house, outside your town, your parish, your native land. But be not discouraged. Do not think that this noble hatred of wrong and this noble love of justice were given to you in vain. *There is a thing that you can do.* Begin to make things better, not at a distance which your voice and hand may never reach, but in your own heart, in your own home. Begin not with impossible dreams of making the great world better, but begin to make better that little spot of it where God has posted you to do his work and to fight his battles. Begin to put your vigour and your enthusiasm

into the doing of the little homely duties that meet you every day. Be better sons to your parents, better brothers to your sisters, better neighbours to your fellows, more forbearing towards each other, more charitable to the poor, better Christians, more loyal and devoted children to the Church your mother. When you have gone nigh to exhaust the possibilities of perfection in these things, then, but scarcely until then, seek to make better the far-spreading world. But, meantime, as you value truth, do not juggle with your common sense by supposing that you can make up for failure in those 'few things,' by your ardour in politics or your profession of patriotism. Is there a more hateful or a more despicable thing in all the broad world than to see a man come forward with his plans and projects for the regeneration of his country and his kind, while he is doing absolutely nothing to regenerate himself?"

The world swings on in its daily course, and a busy place it is. There are a thousand things to be done, and the world applauds the noisy ways of doing them. But surely one must think sometimes of Him who had the fullest knowledge of the evils that afflict mankind, and the fullest power and the most ardent will to remedy them all. And is it not a striking fact that out of thirty-three years of the most perfect and most serviceable life that can ever be lived on earth, no less than thirty were spent in the obscurity of an Eastern village, in the common pursuits of common men, their whole history summed up in just three words that embody an ideal with which the world would have no patience—*Erat subditus illis*. "He was subject to them."



XVI.—ABOUT LIFE (*continued*).

HAVING hit upon a title for a paper under which so much may be included, it will not be surprising to anyone that I should continue to make it the vehicle for such thoughts as will serve to make up another paper. Indeed I must say, that any one of the Lectures of this perhaps unduly prolonged series, is, when it is written, as much a surprise and a novelty to myself as it can possibly be to anyone who reads it. I begin usually with some definite thought, though not with any very definite purpose ; but after a little time I give my mind free play ; one thought suggests another, and there is no knowing into what strange regions of speculation my pen may lead me. I have remarked that there is a multitudinous action of mind that goes on quite below consciousness. Often if, overnight, I cast into my mind, from my reading or otherwise, some little seed, I find next day, or next week, that a plant or a flower has sprung up that affords matter for almost any amount of intellectual botanising. It is eminently true in the sphere of thought that whatever bread you cast upon the waters—the ever-shifting waters of consciousness—even though it flow out of sight into strange eddies and hidden currents, will after many days return to you, bearing upon it incrustations that would convey to a sufficiently subtle analysis, revelations of the strange places through which it had been floating.

Indeed, even the smallest mind has room for more



knowledge than can ever be brought together at one time under a focus of consciousness. We are, none of us, aware of half the amount of our knowledge, but we know this about memory, and it seems to me often the most wonderful of the phenomena of mind, that nothing that is ever committed, however casually, to the memory, even though it be committed to it without any accompaniment of understanding, ever loses its tenacious hold. It may be over-written by later records; the ink in which it is written may fade to an undistinguishable white, but the writing is there, and the acids in which it was recorded are of such sort that the fire of passion or of circumstance may at any time bring it all out with all its primitive freshness. Some day the most ignorant of us shall be astonished to discover all that we (it seems a paradox) unconsciously knew.

However, I have some measure of literary conscience, some respect for the tacit compact I make with my readers by selecting even a vague title; and though I would fain have them construe it indulgently, I would not so far repudiate its obligation as to palm off on them speculations about mental phenomena as a substitute for a lecture "about life." Though when one comes to think of it, how easy would it be to forge for such speculations a plausible claim to a place under so general a title. But the same is true about any subject—"quodlibet in quodlibet converti potest." Thoughts come not only in pairs, but in multitudes. They have a fellow-feeling for each other that makes them easily coalesce, and a family likeness that, come they from what different points of the compass they may, makes them feel sufficiently at home with each other. In the prosecution of her beneficent purposes, nature has

provided certain delicate, floating seeds with an apparatus like "hooks" that find "eyes" in suitable places. Just such an apparatus thoughts seem to have in relation to each other. There is a gregariousness among them; a constant marrying and giving in marriage, and a progeny potentially infinite.

Life is a different thing to different men, because each man makes his own life to his own likeness. The angel of life puts into each child's hand the pen of destiny. As he is, so shall he write; as he writes so shall he be. Nay, a man's desires get themselves fulfilled, and make, and mould him. Be careful what you wish, lest your wish be granted and be the bane of your existence. By his desires a man is made or marred. Here is a story from Plutarch. At the banquet of the seven wise men, Cleobulus said: "The law has prescribed a measure for wise men; but as touching fools I will tell you a story I once heard my mother relate to my brother. On a certain time the moon begged of her mother a coat that would fit her. 'How can that be done?' quoth the mother, 'for sometimes you are full, sometimes the one-half of you seems lost and perished, sometimes only a pair of horns appear.' So, my Chersias, to the desires of a foolish, immoderate man no certain measure can be fitted; for according to the ebbings and flowings of his lust and appetite, and the frequent or seldom casualties that befall him, accordingly his necessities ebb or flow, not unlike Æsop's dog, who, being pinched and ready to starve with cold in winter, was of mind to build himself a house; but when summer came on, he lay all along upon the ground, and stretching himself in the sun thought himself monstrous big, and thought it a needless

thing, and besides no small piece of work, to build him a house proportionable to that bulk and bigness."

Indeed the fewer desires a man has, and the more he reduces the scale from the many things he wants to the few things he needs, the more dignified and the more happy his life becomes. It does not take much to support a man, and the necessities both for soul and body are to be had for a little working and a little asking; and the man who abides by these, and puts the superfluous energy, that most men expend in a hunt after luxuries, into his work, and into his thought, and into his character, he is the man who makes the most of his life. Men soon find out that it is not wealth that avails so much as power; but perhaps they are slower to learn what, after all, is a compendium of the teaching of history, that it is not intellect or talent, or, to put all into a word, ability, that avails so much as character; or rather, that no ability is of any permanent value that has not had due issue in the character of him who possesses it. It is not, even in crises, the commanding intellect that is wanting so much as the reliable man. Whether it be prelate in the church, or ruler in the state, wise men know that not the cleverest man is wanted, but the best—and that the cleverest may no more be the best than the best may be the cleverest. It is wonderful how a very meagre intellectual outfit, if it be backed by principle and character, finds itself equal to the loftiest positions. Intellect, at best, makes the bricks which only character can build up into edifices that last.

A man's views of life express himself. I repeat, he makes his life to his own likeness, and breathes into it the spirit that animates it, whether that spirit be the

spirit of contentment or of discontent, of misanthropy or of charity. If I were asked what is the most plastic of all things, I would answer—hours. They pass, one by one, through our hands, and, as modellers in clay mould images, so we, whether consciously or unconsciously, mould each hour into a miniature likeness of our present selves; and these likenesses, be assured, will remain to confront us long after we have forgotten all about them. The hours are visitors from heaven, each with a gift in hand, but it hides the gift under its gray robe, and needs to be importuned, nay, to be forced into giving it. Bringing possibilities a hundred-fold, yet seeming as if it grudged them all, it will not bestow one unless under pressure of compulsion. The hour loves to be treated as a mother is treated by the children who dive into her pocket for the treasure of sweet stuff which she longs to give but will not give till she make it all the sweeter by the enhancement of discovery and surprise. Of old the gods came in humble guise, hiding their majesty, and if overlooked or insulted, went away leaving no boon. Only to those whose eyes were keen enough to pierce through their disguise, and still more to those whose simple wont it was to treat god and guest to like hospitality, did they reveal themselves by their benefits. So is it with the hours. They come, silent guests, one now, another again, never two together. They look on us with eyes that beseech us to ask their secret; unquestioned they will not speak. All absolutely alike, yet each wearing a new face—for the hour is the veritable Proteus—we, poor mortals, think each so unlike the other. *This* hour is so commonplace, some hour that has passed was, by comparison, so full of interest. Above all, the



*great hour* has not come yet. But remember, if it ever be to come, great hours must lead up to it. And, after all, when it does come, it may steal by in shoes of list, and mock us across the great gulf impassable, with airy phantoms of "things that might have been." We should hold each hour as Jacob held the angel, and refuse to let it go until it bless us.

Nature is very impartial. Such happiness as there is seems to be pretty evenly distributed in all conditions of life. Every advantage has its inevitable drawback, and every disadvantage its equally inevitable compensation. The golden rule would be to make the most of our advantages, and the least of our disadvantages. But to do this it would first be necessary to cultivate that strength of mind that would enable us to live, not according to the opinions of others, but according to our own. A man's happiness is in himself, most of his unhappiness arises from comparison with the imagined, and often purely imaginary, happiness of others. If a man were to take into account and make much of the things with which he is provided—and in the meanest life these are beyond all calculation—and if he were to cultivate the habit of overlooking the things he happens not to have, he would soon come to feel a blissful surprise at the apparatus of happiness that a beneficent Providence has put into the possession of everyone that lives.

But, first, society forms its own standards, and imposes them with tyrannous force upon each individual, and forbids him to be happy after his own fashion. But, next—and this is an equally injurious influence in an opposite direction—men form their own standards from materials supplied by their own pursuits, and



cultivate a studious contempt for those whose pursuits are different. The farmer can scarcely see that any useful purpose is served by a man who does not know wheat from barley, but who can predict an eclipse and follow the courses of the stars. The latter, in his turn, thinks the farmer a coarse necessity, with which a better world will dispense—not reflecting that in that better world, with its enlarged horizon, astronomy may be as puerile as food-producing will be unnecessary. Men of culture grow to despise material things, men of no culture overvalue them. The truth is in the usual position, between the two. Material things are neither of no account nor of all account. Everything fits into its own place. No stone is so insignificant or so unshapely as that it will not help to build the wall. And nothing is for itself alone. In nature and in society each is for all, and all for each.

There is a very good lesson in the old signboard that used to be common; and that is still found amid the conservatism of old towns. It was called “the four alls.” There was a painting of a king, and a priest, and a soldier, and a farmer; and out of the mouth of each respectively came the scrolls—“I govern all,” “I pray for all,” “I fight for all,” “I pay for all.” No doubt it gratified the grumbling vanity of the farmers, who were the best customers of these old inns, and who could scarcely be brought to believe that good government, and good praying, and, as occasion called for it, good fighting, were at least as useful in their way as good payment. But it had a better moral than lay upon the surface; for out of it could be deduced this truth—that the more each works for all the more advantageous is his work to his own self. Indeed,

what is done for others always helps. "*Si vis amari ama*"—"If you want to be loved, love," is always true. If you want to be happy make others happy. "We hate those whom we have injured," is an old saying, and only too true. But it is neither older nor truer than this other—"We grow to love those whom we benefit." And of all ways of making the most and the happiest of life there is none that is so secure of good result, as widening the circle of our service to our fellows.

The other day I was reading Horace's "Art or Poetry," and came in due course to the celebrated line that has by universal consent been erected into a canon of criticism—

"Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci."—

"He hits the white who use with beauty blends."

It struck me as an excellent maxim not only in the domain of criticism, but in the domain of life. There is need in life of both use and beauty, and a deficiency in either will mar the man. Of course use is the most useful. On a basis of utility must every man stand who wishes his life to be of any worth. Whether the work be making shoes or making verses, whatever play of fancy may be around the work (and it need not be absent even from the manipulation of leather), it needs to have in it and through it a strong fibre of usefulness.

It was no such foolish question in itself, however foolish in the context of the asking, that some one proposed as a test of the "Paradise Lost"—"what does it prove?" For it was bound to prove something. I should have been prompt to answer: "It proves the

almost infinite capability of the human spirit. It proves that the men we meet every day are not the highest types of the race; that imagination can seize upon the dead bones of material knowledge, give them flesh and blood, and breathe into them a soul that makes them immortal. It proves that this world which we see and feel is not all; that other and fairer worlds lie behind the veil, and that the light of a strong spirit can make the veil almost transparent. In the syllogism of the mere logician the conclusion will lie no wider than the premises, but in the syllogisms of genius it is not so. The clouds prove something more than clouds, the flowers and grass afford conclusions that never were in *them*. If stars and sunshine and the emotions of human hearts be the premises, a poet can draw out of them conclusions that escape the telescope of the astronomer, the analysis of the chemist, the theory of the philosopher. Show me beauty, and I shall show you use—use in its highest power—use transfigured.

In ancient mythology, heroes consecrated by death were enrolled among the gods; in all times the commonest things of use, once they pass by the agency of the poet into the sphere of the beautiful, become god-like. The antiseptic properties of imagination are truly wonderful. Put a common name or a not uncommon deed into the verse of a poet, and they shall outlast the history of which they were a part. Nor less wonderful is its power of dignifying its themes. Every day we see common men, and scan with contempt or sympathy or pure indifference the little passages of their lives. We meet them hot with eagerness about interests which, not being ours, we call petty; we see them laughing, loving, hating, working, idling—and

our least uncharitable verdict about them is that they are profoundly uninteresting. But let these very men and their affairs be strained through a brain that has even a slight tincture of imagination, and poured into a novel, and the youths and maidens will weep and wonder over details in no wise more worthy of tears or admiration than the details they are themselves spinning out of the passing hours.

The mistake is we aim only at use in our lives, and seek for beauty only in literature and art. The man is wise who seeks both use and beauty in his own life, who *lives* poems and essays, and histories that shall, as assuredly they shall if they be worthy, charm society in heaven.

But in the end, everything stands by its use. Nor need the most ardent votary of the beautiful cavil at the assertion: for the beautiful is the useful, *plus* something far more and far higher. Everything must vindicate itself by its utility in the long run—and everything, whether coming from hand, or brain, or heart, must be ready with prompt answer to the question—"What does it prove?—What is its use?"

The useful, however, will take care of itself, and find people enough to take care of it. But what "practical" men call "mere beauty" is apt to go to the wall in a world that specially prides itself on being utilitarian. If we were to form an opinion from the outspoken declarations of influential organs, the sum of all philosophy might seem to be discoverable in the records of the patent office. The man who invents an easy-chair, or discovers a new anodyne, takes a place among the benefactors of the race that would, with difficulty, be accorded to Aristotle or to Plato. The



philosophists of the day cry out for "fruit"—but they have so restricted a notion of what "fruit" means in connection with philosophy, that their views of man might almost be summed up in the definition of an epicurean given by Plutarch—one whose life is a circle described with the stomach as a centre. However, the human mind craves after some food more congenial to itself than material pleasure, and the baldest utilitarianism will not be satisfied till it makes a system and forms a philosophy. It will appeal to something in man nobler than his stomach; and accordingly it comes out with its grand "greatest happiness" principle. They lay it down with an air as if they had a monopoly for conferring happiness on the human race. They seem to think that their principle is peculiar to themselves, whereas it is only the working of it that is peculiar. "The greatest happiness of the greatest number." By all means, say I; who would be so cruel as to disown such a principle? But now comes definition of terms. Definition is the real philosopher's stone, capable of transmuting very base metals into pure gold. Give me, in this case, the defining of happiness, and I shall have no hesitation in upholding the greatest happiness principle. You may call me utilitarian, if you will, but I think it would be easy to show that utilitarianism, qualified by my definition, is in sum and substance the system laid down in the "Sermon on the Mount."

After all, we soon learn that it is not material utility alone that stamps with value, but something beyond and beside such use. Man may plume himself upon the utilities he serves, but if he had no more than these to boast of, he were low enough in the scale of beings. In things pertaining to mere material use, almost all



creatures excel man. The eyes of some insects are microscopic beyond conception ; but such insects do not see in the blade of grass to which they cling what a man can see. Birds of prey have telescopic eyes. but they see only their prey ; and though the eagle may gaze at the sun, the eagle cannot see what you and I have seen in the sunrise and the sunset. We come fast to the conclusion that it is not the thing seen that matters, but the thing that lies behind it, that it suggests. Thought must sit behind sight, if sight is to be of any permanent use. Nay, we must go further still : it is not mere thought that steads—lost spirits have it deep and keen—but thought worked up by will into love.

The chemist can analyse a food, can resolve it into its elements, can bottle up each of them and label them with their proper titles. But he cannot *make* a food. Only nature does that, and mark with what a seeming waste of expenditure. Not analytic is she in her operations, but synthetic to an extreme. Not satisfied with what might seem sufficient to serve the purposes of use, but lavish of beauty in every stroke of work she does. She lays with a care, whose minuteness is itself beauty, the skeleton of her plant, and pours into it the food-forming constituents. But not alone this. She drapes it in beauty in its every part, covering it with tissues as delicate as human nerves, laying over it a protecting shield of the most delicate, downy texture, and displaying consummate skill in painting it with colours that run and shade into each other till they give hints which no Raphael is able to carry out. Nature evidently wants to feed not only the stomach, but the eye and all the hungry senses. Nay, not only

the senses will she feed, but the soul. Her skill passes into sense only to be transmuted into force, for the express use of an immortal spirit. But what I want to point out here is, that nature is never satisfied with mere use. She will have beauty, if it were on the crest of a venomous snake, or on the surface of an old wall or of a stagnant pool. No utility of her making is ever disjoined from a certain appropriate beauty; and even to things that seem useless, she will give the high utility of beauty itself.

So it ought to be with our lives. No life ought to be starved of beauty. Even beauty of sense, material beauty, might play a large part in refining the rough conditions of existence. The elements of this beauty, nay, their exquisite combinations, are fortunately not expensive. They are everywhere, needing only the seeing eye and the combining hand. I cannot lift my eyes for a moment without seeing on every side a very wealth of beauty, if I were only capable of taking it into my life; and such capability comes of education. This is the function of art, to raise life from the low level of a mere struggle for food for the body to the higher level of aspiration for food for the mind and soul. Too little care, it seems to me, is taken in our educational systems to cultivate the artistic tendencies of the human spirit. To the great bulk of men, to be sure, artistic education in any great degree is for the present an impossibility. A coarse woodcut must stand to them for the great art of the painter, and an urn on a gate-post be the highest form in which sculpture presents itself. Even literature, that of its own nature appeals to a wider circle, must still, for the vast majority, be represented solely by the newspaper. I am of

opinion that the artistic culture needed for common life could best and most easily be given by music. The conditions for its cultivation are easily combined. The elements of it are as ubiquitous as the human throat. I believe that music might be made the instrument of just such culture as young men living by mechanical employments specially need.

I wish we had in common use a better class of songs, songs with nobler words and healthier and manlier sentiment than one finds linked to some of the touching airs of the "Christy Minstrels." I am no musician, but I can sometimes imagine what it is to be one; to pour forth music, whether from throat or finger tip, that takes men's hearts by storm; to make eyes kindle and hearts beat, and heart-strings quiver till emotion finds its only issue in tears or ecstasy; and above all, to reach every heart. It is so different from mere speaking, however good. The most practised speaker must sometimes feel that he is talking over people's heads; a good musician, I imagine, need never fear that he is playing above their hearts.

Indeed the effects produced by music sometimes seem to lift a corner of the veil that hides great life mysteries; leading us to a dim idea of possible modes of being, and of being happy, which mere reason could never conjecture. We esteem reason highly, and surely not without reason. We would fain walk by its dictates codified into habitual prudence. But there come times when we feel the spell and the witchery of something for which reason cannot altogether account, and which prompts to courses far above the sphere of mere prudence. Ask the enthusiasts in noble causes if it be not so. The triumph of reason is self-possession,

but ecstasy is a going out of oneself, and the mere hints of it that are given by music and poetry and enthusiasm seem to indicate the road to the highest happiness. Have you ever listened to singing, say to the singing of children's voices, and felt at least the possibility of hurling yourself against adamant fate itself for some great cause. But, then, when the music has ceased, and the voices are silent again, and the spell of the poet has been lifted off, and the glow of the enthusiasm died down, cold reason comes back and tries to persuade one that this touch of partial ecstasy was but a revelation of infinite possibilities of foolishness. One cannot have everything. Hitherto reason and ecstasy, even in its lower form of enthusiasm, have hardly been combined. Or is it that we fail to see the combination. Enthusiasm can give a good account of itself. It has done good work and hard work. It is commonly thought, by people who must have twenty shillings for every pound, that enthusiasm is badly paid. But like everything else that is worth payment, it pays itself. Nature never drained off the vital forces into a huge enthusiasm without making due compensation to the individual, whom I do not know whether or not to call its victim.

So far have I been led in speaking about the need of beauty and artistic culture in life. But I have not forgotten, indeed, all I have been saying has been leading up to this, that beauty and culture must come to most men, even if they are to come at all, from morality and religion. Indeed, any culture not founded upon these has in it the germ of death and corruption. And I say, with great thankfulness, that amongst the vast majority of our poor people these agents of

culture are in full operation, making in many an undistinguished life a beauty that gladdens the eyes of angels.

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### XVII.—ABOUT ILLUSIONS.

AT every turn in nature and in society I find illusion; appearances leading to one conclusion, and hiding the reality that would establish a conclusion altogether different. We live and work amid illusions, and make them an integral portion of our life and of our work. I go forth in the early summer and see the distant hills clothed with unutterable blue till one can hardly say where mountain ends and sky begins. They are, or might be, the very hills of Beulah. And yet I know too well that the nearer I advance the more will the glory fade, and should I reach the mountain top I would find myself weary and footsore, my feet on boulder and my head in mist.

The world, too, the human world, looks fair at a distance. I can look at it from what distance I please. I can lean my ear over the gulf into which one after one the centuries have fallen, and listen to the voices that still sound out of the past. The hero's voice is loud, the songs of some few poets strike upon the ear. Fragments of great doings of the world's great ones survive in what men call history. But these only serve in great measure to make one misconceive the past. Tones from the living present mingle in spite



of me with the music, and make the old tune very different from what it was when it was new. These few voices that still sound, what can they tell me of the unrecorded millions who were dumb—for all historic purposes—even while they lived, and who surely have not found a voice in the grave? Then, impatient of a study, the chief materials for which have perished, I turn to the men of to-day. Well, what can I know even of them? When I look at them they smile or frown, are gay or gloomy. But what can I infer without a fear of being deceived? The features of the face seem in league to disappoint us. The lip says one thing, the eye another. Tongue and thought are often not at one but at two. Theory is at war with practice. Yet I suppose men who live long enough to grow wise—*rari nantes*—do learn some skill in physiognomy, but it is always liable to mistake and open to correction.

No one will ever know either himself or the world who has not learned to know and make allowance for at least what may be called the “stock” illusions of the great human drama. Think you, O fool, that men are what they seem? Think you, O greater fool, that men are what they say, or what they posture, or what they dress? They are only players.

You, young sir, who with open eyes of wonder and outstretched hands of eagerness have just arrived at this great fair of vanity, the performance is about to begin. In truth, it has always been beginning, but none the less will it begin again in your behoof. In your childish innocence you ask, Is it all true? And I, the chorus for the time being, answer: “Yes, it is as true as first-rate actors can make it.” There is our

king, a fine fellow, you will know him by his crown, which you are not near enough to see is only paste-board; but a good coating of tinsel makes it look as well as if it were solid gold, and is much cheaper. Quoting unconsciously from the great playwright you pursue your inquiries: "Is this a dagger that I see before me?" Well, it is only lath. Nor is there any generous wine in that goblet, no more than there is poison in that suspicious-looking bowl. Here be heroes on pedestals which their robes conceal; villains, too, of dye as deep as the burnt cork upon their faces; ladies, fair as paint and spangles can make them. Here is virtue posturing in temporary rags (temporary; for we are nothing if not moral), and vice flaunting in equally temporary silk and satin—for we undertake to compress the whole moral order into our half-hour's acting. A word would I say in your ear; but your ear is too young, and too engrossed with the drum and pandean pipe to hear or heed me. It is this: the actors are only actors—so far as you can see. It may possibly be that the villainy of the villain is not even skin deep, and may come off with a washing; or—for I, the chorus, am quite impartial—it may be that he will carry his villainy into private life. Again, our hero's heroism may belong more to his coat than to his character, and when, after the performance, he quenches his heroic thirst in a pot of beer, the keenest observer may not be able to discern even the latent possibilities of heroism. But, bless you, you are all too young to moralise or to be reached by a moral. You are steeped up to the eyes and ears in illusion. I should scarcely fear to let you handle the lath sword, and peer into the wineless

wine cup, and examine the gilt pasteboard of the monarch's diadem; for over them all is a halo of illusion, that for many a day to come will with you pass them current, not for what they are but for what they seem.

A little later on I meet you again, but no longer before the noisy booth. You are older, or, to say it better, a little less young. You affect solitude, and have taken to your heart a favourite poet. Whoever the happy bard be, I swear without seeing that it is not Shakspeare. Too soon yet for Shakspeare by ten or fifteen years. Your favourite is not, that is, needs not to be, to be your favourite, a very deep thinker. He plays at most a three-stringed lyre—love, sorrow, death—these be the strings. There is no organ music deep with ground tones of passion of which you have yet no idea. The music is thin, but it suffices for your musical requirements. Your poet takes an arc of human society not much larger than your own eye has been able to measure. He thinks habitually on about the same level as you think yourself, and excels you in not much else than the faculty of sweet expression. All the more you take him to your heart, because he hits off life at precisely the angle at which it has presented itself to your juvenile experience. And for that reason, too, he is in your eyes immeasurably superior to the great world-famous fathers of song. You are too shamefaced to say as much, but you think it all the same, and are filled with secret wonder that your older cultured friends are so indifferent to *your* poet. You wonder why men will prate about the 'Paradise Lost' which you find heavy, or about those Shakspearean plays that are so like the world they

present that you can no more lavish admiration on them than you can upon the sun, moon, and stars, or the human characters that are developing before your unconscious gaze every moment of your life.

There is illusion about what you read—but there is a deeper illusion to which I want to call attention. You turn from the poetry to speculate about the poet. If you could only know him. If you only had the privilege of being his friend, how the common things of life would take new colour from his companionship. You judge the poet by his poetry; fallacious test—fond illusion. But afterwards you will come to lay it down as a maxim that in any kind of imaginative writing you can scarcely ever divine the real man from the man who held the pen. I do not say such divination is impossible, but it is possible only to experts whom time and experience have taught to read not only between the lines, but underneath the lines—to read not only what is written, but the unwritten things that have given it life and a voice. But you to whom I speak are ten or twenty years too young for any such skilled criticism. For you, for the present, what a man writes, that he is. Ah me! what fine fellows they are, these poets. Such an eye for beauty, such an ear for music, such a heart wide open to every subtle influence that coarser spirits never feel—such a “hate of hate, such scorn of scorn, such love of love”—such grand enthusiasm for the beautiful and the good, such lofty aspirations and irrepressible hopes. What a blessing it were to have such a man for your friend, who might in the common paths of everyday life occasionally lend you the rose-coloured spectacles through which would be glorified the everyday world which you find leaden-coloured and

sombre. Well, revel in thoughts like these ere yet the world has passed before you and revealed the trick of scenic illusion. Do not as yet seek to peep behind the scenes. The poet who has thrilled your heart with lofty thoughts set to sweetest music, let him but lay down the lyre, and it may be that he sinks into a common man, who very possibly has left his noblest thoughts at the bottom of his inkpot. He may be mean, may be selfish, may be envious of his brother bard who has got four strings to his lyre, not three. Such things have been, and shall be again and again, while the world is a world. It is so very easy and inexpensive to be noble—on paper.

A man's best work reveals to fine insight a man's ideals, which, whether he has written out in colours more lasting than printer's ink, whether he has realised in solid fact of character, remains to tell. But of this be sure, the nobler his written work is, if his life has fallen much beneath it in loftiness of realised purpose, all the keener toothed is the curse that clings to him, and that, humanly speaking, is adequate punishment for his failure, however great it be.

But on far less grounds than are afforded by a man's written words, estimates are made of a man's character. One of the chief illusions of youth is to be prompt and decisive in the reading of character. A young person has scarcely any conclusions to which he has not jumped. An older man forms his conclusions with more difficulty—makes large allowance for moral and mental gravitation—and is much slower to act on his conclusions even when they are formed. Can you tell a man's character by his eye, or his lip, or his voice? Well, probably the time was when you thought you



could. You are wiser now, for you have learned how first impressions need to be revised, and have discovered the liability to mistake that accompanies these off-hand judgments.

But can you not judge a man by his acts? Have you not the highest authority: "By their fruits you shall know them?" Very true; but what if the fruit have not had time to form. Do you think it would be quite fair to come when only the bud or the blossom is there, or when the fruit is crude and hard and tasteless, that might in due season mellow into refreshing sweetness. Isolated acts are, to a certain extent, indicators of character, just as the weathercock is an indicator to the direction of the wind. But the points of the compass measure large spaces, and it will need more than a cursory glance at the most correct weathercock to tell the precise degree on the quarter arc from which the wind blows. Besides, to carry on the illustration, there are certain temporary under-currents that catch a weathercock, while all the time the great, steady over-current may be bearing with all its force in quite another direction.

Acts may be elements of character, but they are so as points are the elements of a circle. Given one or another point we cannot hope straightway to prophesy the circumference. But we are prone to think we can. We rush to lay down a radius and complete the circle, and of course we are often wofully deceived. This is probably the reason why youth is generally in extremes in its judgments of others. It either loves altogether, or hates utterly—is guided either by a prepossession or a prejudice. All its geese are swans, and the geese that are only geese are the merest gabblers, incapable

either of laying eggs or saving the Capitol. For, youth has got a point or two, and has completed the circle out of its own inner consciousness.

This too, perhaps, gives the explanation to a sufficiently curious fact. We are never a whit surprised at our own inconsistencies, but we are mortally pained by those of others. For instance, *we* can do a kind thing now and an unkind thing another time, even to the same person. And we expect him to keep his gratitude for the former unspoiled by his anger at the latter. We expect him to discriminate, but we ourselves discriminate but little. A series of benefits closed by an injury from the same hand will leave a total feeling that takes most, if not all, its colouring from the last act of the series. Our pleading in our own case is this: "I have done a kindness and (perhaps) an unkindness, let him, then, be grateful for the former even though he be hurt by the latter." When we stand on the opposite side we change the pleading. "This man did me a kindness, thereby leading me to believe he was my friend; now he disappoints my reasonable expectations by doing me this wrong—what a traitor!—and since a traitor, what a hypocrite he must have been from the first."

We know that we are not always up to the level of our best mood, but we rigorously exact equality of mood from others. We are fond of judging by "samples"—which would be fair enough if they were offered as professed samples. But we select the samples ourselves and then turn upon our acquaintance as if he had given them in as express standards of judgment. Age teaches us tolerance; teaches that men are not all good, nor all evil—not all angel, nor, still less, God be

thanked, all devil ; that as much sometimes depends on the eye seeing as on the thing seen ; that men may present to others a very different appearance from that they present to us, and that the reason of the difference may be quite as much in ourselves as in them. Perhaps we are not, as regards this particular man, sufficiently sympathetic ; and sympathy is as needful to develop the best points of character as sunshine is needed to bring out the best points of a landscape. You have sometimes heard a friend speak enthusiastically about some one you never met. He is genial, full of wit and humour, a most delightful companion. Afterwards it happens that you meet him. He chills you, freezes you, has little or nothing to say, has not a spark of wit, or a ray of humour, is heavy and lumpish. How mistaken your friend was in him. Not so ; you saw him under a cloud, and the cloud came in great part from your want of sympathy. He really was to your friend what you would not let him be to you. Indeed, I think the world belongs in its fulness only to the sympathetic. And youth is rarely sympathetic. It has not time. It is too fevered with its own thoughts and dreams. It can scarcely make allowance for others, for it has not travelled far enough on the road of life to have come up with other persons' points of view. Meantime no better working maxim than this—

“ There is some soul of goodness in things evil.”

We are odd compounds full of explosive material to which circumstance may at any time apply a spark, with results undreamt of even by those who thought they knew us best. You never know what a man is

till something comes upon him that shakes him somewhat out of his ordinary self; and if that something never come he may carry to the grave latent possibilities of heroism, or the reverse, which had they been realised would have been even more the surprise than the admiration or the disgust of his brothers and kinsfolk.

Take up some of these brown, insignificant-looking seeds—very dull-coloured and very small. You may examine them under the solar microscope, but none the more will their potentialities be revealed to you. So long as they lie upon your study table they will remain seeds, neither more nor less. But plant them. Give them the soil that suits and the conditions that foster, and in the appointed time you will have the flower or the fruit of which the seed gave no apparent promise. The life is, all the time, at the heart of the seed; but the heart is invisible. How many centuries the grains of wheat remained mere seeds in the dead hand of the Egyptian mummy, hoarding all the while the life that had outlived forgotten dynasties. So with men. A man may be your neighbour for years, and very possibly you may see nothing particular in him; and yet in a particular crisis, which, indeed, may never come, he may be the one man of all men to do the work of a hero. You think there is here some exaggeration. Take, then, your favourite heroes of history. Do you think they were always heroes, or that even when in some particular crisis they reached the flood-tide of heroism, they remained at that elevated pitch during every particular moment of their after-lives? Or do you suppose that their particular friends or their everyday acquaintances were the first to discover in them possi-

bilities of heroism? Rather, were they not the last? Do you suppose that Cassius did not represent an important section of Roman society, when he could not for the life of him see that Cæsar was more than any other mortal man? Do you think that there was no school-fellow of Brutus, who, mayhap, remembered him smarting under the ferula of the pedagogue, and who wondered where in the world was that loftiness of character that public opinion of all shades gave him credit for?

A prophet has honour except in his own country. If ever it be given at all, the suffrage of one's native town is last given to confirm a claim to the prophetic title. How hard it must always have been for the school-fellows of great men to reconcile themselves to the fact that the little boy who sat upon the same form and stumbled at the same difficulties, mathematical or classical, is precisely the same individual who has since written his name (by the way, how badly he used to write) across the history of his age.

Take two boys of apparently equal endowments, running the school-boy race, now one slightly ahead, now another, grown in the same soil, moulded under the same circumstances, acted upon by like influences—up to a certain point. Then they separate, and for ever. One goes away and quickly perishes from every local memory, except that of his mother. A letter comes now and then announcing strange things and rapid advancement; the which hearing the wise untravellerd townsmen append the mental marginal note of "travellers' tales—mothers' partiality." The other, meantime, stays at home, utilises his gifts, becomes a considerable personage in his native town; graduates



in all the honours which a local constituency can confer, has, as of right divine, a hebdomadal place in the local newspaper; makes for himself a shell of worldly substance as substantial as the shell of an oyster, and if ever, at odd times, his thoughts turn to the companion of his boyhood, it is but to wonder at the mistaken perversity of his vagabond tendencies. Picture to yourself, then, that some day to this quiet town comes the intelligence that the vagabond losel, who had pointed to local imagination the parable of the prodigal son, has done some world-famous deed. What a stir, half of wonder, half of incredulity, the news awakens. It cannot have been, after all, so great an achievement, since it was done by him. The world may wonder, but the world does not know him as we do. And believe me, if he have, say, won a great victory, his quondam school-mate will shake his sapient head, and opine that the enemy must have been poor créatures, whom it took very little to conquer.

Let us not forget, however, that this side of the question may be urged too far. Long ago the cynics and the sneerers have got hold of it, and worked it to death. "No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre," says the cynical proverb. Long ago, too, in the days when up-strokes and down-strokes were much more important than the sentiment they might happen to express, we met the maxim in a more pretentious if less pithy form, in the head-line, "Familiarity begets contempt." But with reverence to the proverb-mongers, I make bold to question their inferences. No amount of familiarity will beget contempt for anything that is not intrinsically contemptible—and if it beget contempt for noble things, it is that the mind on which familiarity

produced such an effect has, in itself, no affinity to what is noble. Use, to be sure, somewhat dulls keen eagerness, and somewhat modifies our reverence for what is noble; but so far from destroying that reverence, use, if use have been in anywise worthy, only intensifies it, by drawing some of it inward from the surface to the great moral life centres.

If no man be a hero to his valet-de-chambre it is because no man can be expected to be up to the level of heroism in his intercourse with that functionary. Let us suppose that the "hero" has come home excited almost to irritability, physically and mentally exhausted by a successful effort in the "House." Do you expect him to bring the embers of any Demosthenic fire he may happen to have to bear upon his sleepy valet? Or say that he is a poet, and that before leaving his study he has given the last exquisite touch to a piece of word-painting worthy to hang for many a year on the "*flammantia mœnia mundi*." Do you expect him to demand his chamber candlestick in blank verse? And if he be not such a fool as to do these things, how can his heroism reach his poor valet? The truth is, as no one is always wise, so no one is always a hero. Nor, if you think of it, could any right-minded man want to be.

I remember having my juvenile imagination greatly excited by the appearance of a man on stilts. I would have given anything for a pair and the power to use them. What a thing it would be to go through the old town in such wise that the first floor window-stools would be as familiar as the doorsteps. I thought I should never tire of them, never take them off. But reflection came later, and I bethought me that there

were several highly desirable positions with which stilts were manifestly incompatible. How could I sit at meals, indeed, how sit conveniently at all? Above all, how could I go to bed o' nights? Stilts might be very desirable, but only for occasional use.

There are no clearer instances of illusion than those connected with the same subject of heroism. Ask the question through all the seven stages of life: What is a hero?—and mark how different in each will the answers be. Ideals flourish and fade and spring up into ever new ideals. To the very young boy *the* hero is probably his own father, as the most perfect specimen of human power with which he has yet made acquaintance. The thing his father cannot do has no place in his present list of abstract possibilities. Later on he begins to suspect the existence of other powers more admirable; then, he more than suspects, and other heroes crowd upon him as life widens. The drummer-boy of a passing regiment—is there anything like him? Or our boy goes to a neighbouring race-course and sees the winning colour flash by—could fortune bestow any greater destiny than to ride in the winner amid the plaudits of the crowd? I have known boys to whom upon the topmost pinnacle of human ambition was seated the driver of a locomotive.

Then the boy begins to make acquaintance with books. Here be heroes numberless, and each one from the gloomily grand to the blithely debonair, has his turn. And does hero worship and the making of ideals cease when a man grows older and grows old? Did it ever strike you what an immense amount of what under analysis would turn out to be poetry, is to be found in the lives of hard, practical men of the world? Cer-

tainly it is so, if by poetry is meant seeing the ideal under the actual. The motto of such men is, if not (ah! not) "*excelsior*," at all events "*ulterior*." They rest in no present. Some shining splendour lures them on to the far future, and so dazzles them that they see not, nor heed, the ruggedness of the road. Spectators from the outside, like myself, are simply amazed at their pertinacity and their endurance, but we see not the glittering glory of the talisman. We only see that their feet are bleeding and their breath failing, and, worst of all, their hearts hardening, to meet the exigencies of their toil; that, in their mad career, the conditions of the highest human happiness almost thrust themselves upon them, and are slighted and cast aside. They trample on everything, on their own better selves, nobler instincts, higher impulses—degrading even these into stepping-stones to let themselves down into the pit of meanness and misery. Then, as they have trampled on themselves so will they trample on others. Hence have we (even women sometimes rank in the melancholy band) mothers "preaching down a daughter's heart," and fathers on the watch lest any flower of unselfishness should spring up in their son's heart and cumber the soil that needs all its forces for the due cultivation of the absorbing plant, self-interest. And then comes retribution—retribution that has grown up a very child of the house, as retribution usually does, but that startles when it is full grown as if it were a spectre. What a sadly pathetic thing it is, and who has not seen it?—a father, who, in toiling for his son's advantage, has never had time to find the way to his son's heart; and who, dying under the shadow of a loveless home, looks vainly for that delicate flower of

human affection the seed of which he never cared to plant. Here be poetry, I say, not, my dear young reader, such as would befit a lady's album, but poetry, nevertheless—for poetry can shriek as well as pipe, and even set itself sometimes, as in Dante's *Inferno*, to the howling of the damned.

It is a nice test of character, as well as a fine measure of the density of the atmosphere of illusion, what sort of ending one wishes to the stories he reads: and, as most people read stories now-a-days (and many read nothing else) the test and the measure would be of almost universal application. We all want, I suppose, "poetical justice," but poetical justice varies as the calibre of the mind that conceives it. Real poetical justice falls in marvellously with the moral order of the universe. Sham poetical justice would make itself a necessary appendix to the great scheme of things, which, according to this programme, has been left lamentably incomplete. But it is hazardous to retouch a masterpiece. Poetical justice of the baser stamp is very summary and must see itself out within very limited compass. It is the justice of persons who cannot believe in any action of justice that does not fall within the scope of their personal observation. They want results, and want them more quickly than the conditions of the universe can afford to grow them. They want to remake a world which, on the whole, has been very well made as it is. A "hero," born of this sort of poetical justice, is one who gets everything by the expenditure of nothing; produces effects without adequate causes. Young people, and some people are never old, will have their novel made up after the fashion in which children make their flower gardens.



No waiting for the slow process of nature ; for a child is as yet incredulous about long spaces of time : no seed-sowing and culture ; above all, no delay. The child, then, plucks the gayest and gaudiest flowers and sticks the broken stalks into the little patch—happy if he forget all about them before they wither, as wither they surely must.

The boy and girl will have the villain punished in the last chapter, and a (material) paradise of earthly felicity expressly created for a hero and heroine, who, perhaps, on analysis, have little to recommend them except persistent self-seeking. But in any case, a paradise that is expressly created must be the work of a magic of which the real world has lost the secret since the days of Aladdin's palace. Later on we find such a paradise an unreality. If paradise there be it must have been the growth of time, and suitable material, and skilful construction. It must have antecedents. It must not be merely "stuck on." You think, perhaps, these things are of little importance, but you forget the effect on character of the persistent setting up of false standards. Never lose sight of the fact, which this juggling strives to hide, that there is a higher success than worldly success, a higher prosperity than material prosperity. "Because a man lives well he shall have pudding stuck all over with plums." This is a child's reading of the moral order. A man's, a wise man's, is different. "Because a man lives after the eternal laws of the universe his character shall be harmonised with these laws : because he has lived nobly, the nobility has grown into his character and his soul." Once it is so with him it matters not at all what comes to him from without. If life come he is fit to live ; if

prosperity, it will not spoil him ; if adversity, his nobleness will be enhanced by the frolic welcome he can afford to give it ; and if death come, then he who does not know that death is the hero's very crown knows not what a hero is. Nahum Tate would have had Lear live on to enjoy the earthly counterbalance to his misfortunes. But Shakspeare sternly says No—

“Vex not his ghost ; O let him pass. He hates him  
Who would upon the rack of this rough world  
Stretch him out longer.”

And poor old Lear was not a hero—far less ; and far less fit to die.

Illusions—you see I come back, however circuitous my route—illusions serve to very beneficent purposes. They are nature's toys for children of all ages, from four to four score. They serve to ease the strain of life, and to stimulate the flagging spirit. How could we get on at all if we had eyes to see nothing but the bare, hard realities of things ? We do not see our own illusions, but they are present among the conditions of our existence. We easily see those of others. Watch men engaged in pursuits alien to your own—pursuits with which you have no manner of sympathy. At first you wonder where in the unsightly machinery can be hidden the mainspring of their energy and their eagerness. But after a little time you will be conscious that they see something which you do not see. These pursuits present themselves to them wrapped in a golden mist of illusion that lends them all their charm. Everyone creates, or at any rate, helps to create, the atmosphere in which life and the world present themselves to him.

I go into a house where there is a large family—father, mother, boys, and girls. All ages are represented down to the infant in arms; and to make the picture complete, there is the old grandfather laden with the somewhat obsolete wisdom of a bygone generation. These interest me, because among them I can go through the whole gamut of illusion. Take first the most important member of the family, the baby. I hold up before baby some glittering bauble, and immediately the little eyes are astare, and the little hands astretch. Is it not manifest that there is around the worthless bauble a halo which neither I nor anyone see? But baby sees it, and that is enough for him. All his little life is gathered up in a passion of desire. We all laugh at the eagerness that is so unmeaning to us. His mother laughs, but if she could only see it, her laugh is premature. So far as illusion is concerned, she and baby might change places. As around the bauble for him, so around him for his mother is a halo which nobody sees but herself. Anon comes little miss who is beatified by a new dress, the lustre of which lights up the very world. Then young master has got a pony; an elder brother has got a gun. Presently a young lady enters. Just now she is seeing life through a Tennysonian medium, and life has a pathetic sadness and sweetness with which the moods of boisterous brothers are scarcely reconcilable. The father is making his everyday work poetical with illusions made up of the home memories that haunt him even upon 'Change, and out of which he weaves a golden future of sons and daughters settled to his wish. And as for the old grandfather, he lives in the illusion that he is the earthly providence from which all these things

came, and by which they are kept together; and, though he is eighty, there is one illusion that never leaves him, nor ever will till he be laid in the coffin—that he is sure to live, at all events, another year.

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### XVIII.—ABOUT EXPERIENCE.

EXPERIENCE is a fruit that grows on every life-tree, but it is by no means of uniform quality. What taste it will have depends very much on the kind of tree on which it is grown. It may be sweet, or acid, or positively bitter. I like to try the flavour of a man's experience—to learn how things have presented themselves to him, what are his favourite points of view, and, above all, I like to extract from him, as it were, the very essence of his particular life in the form of his opinions of men. There is nothing, to my thinking, gives a larger insight into the character of *Brutus*—Shakespeare's *Brutus*—nor is there anything in that character I more admire than the phase of it that comes to the surface incidentally, just when the shadow of doom was upon him—

“My heart doth joy that yet, in all my life,  
I found no man but he was true to me.”

Truth breeds truth, trust finds fidelity, and the actual experience of a genial nature is never cynical. If the predominant flavour of a man's experience be bitter.

the bitterness came not alone from the outward circumstances that touched him, and of which he believes his experience to be but the reflection ; but it came far more from an "*aliquid amari*," a little spring of bitterness that welled up from the very depths of his own character.

It seems universally true that a man finds in life just what he brings. His own soul creates the atmosphere through which it sees the world and men, and that atmosphere it is, quite as much as anything inherent in themselves, that gives them the precise colouring they seem to have. When you look at an object through a coloured glass, and pronounce it, say, red, you are describing not so much the colour of the object as the colour of the glass through which you look at it. When you sum up the result of your experience of men and things, do you think you are not portraying your own inner self rather than them ? Be, therefore, careful what you say. I, for one, shall not think the better of you nor the worse of the world, if I find you describing everything and everyone as more or less a sham and a humbug—and thinking that the hand of everyone is, as a matter of course, against everyone else, that there is no such thing as disinterestedness, and that if you examine minutely you will find low motive nestling under the shadow of the sublimest actions of men. I have enumerated these opinions because they form the esoteric doctrines of a school of "men of the world," who would claim for themselves exclusively the possession of any experience worthy of the name. But I thank them for their fine tale. Their mistake is that while they think they are telling it about the world, it is really telling itself about



them. Be careful of what you say, but be still more careful what you think. A man's thoughts, springing from his present character, and reacting upon it, prepare for him a future character of intenser shade. Now, a man's thoughts are more in a man's own power than most people seem to imagine. He can change them very often, he can suppress them sometimes, he can always modify them. Faith in man is a great natural gift, and, like other of God's gifts, it grows larger and more valuable by proper use. Believe in the existence of nobility, and worth, and lofty purpose, and disinterested motive, for such belief is an indispensable condition of your ever having any of these fine qualities to adorn your own life.

Now, if a man really believed in the existence of these things, he would be on the look out for them in the world around him, he would expect rather to see them occasionally than not to see them at all; and, with a little practice in looking, his eyes would grow keen enough to discover more or less of them in the ordinary lives of ordinary men, in whom assuredly a cynic would see nothing to admire.

Do I think that Brutus never was the victim of falsehood, that treachery never spun its subtle net around his trustful nature? Well, I believe that he was less the victim of such things than would have been a man who had less trust in men. I believe that trust, in nine cases out of ten, disarmed treachery; that men were, in spite of themselves, truer to Brutus than they would, nay, than they could have been to meaner men, and that, at all events, he was a thousandfold better and happier because he had large trust in others.

There is a common notion that experience and

wisdom are correlative attributes. But it is not so; they may, and do, exist apart from each other. Every life-tree, I began by saying, grows experience, but wisdom is a much rarer fruit. It is hard to find that precise combination of the prudence of the serpent and the innocence of the dove that constitutes wisdom. If you have ever known a really wise man, you will probably have known one whose character gave a first impression of childlike simplicity, which, on longer acquaintance, you found modified by a shrewdness that paralysed any attempt at deception. He was easy enough about small personal matters; but with him it was "penny foolish, or apparently foolish, but pound wise"—touch him on a matter of principle, and he was the most inflexible of men.

It is a gracious and a graceful thing in young people to be very willing to accord to age every privilege with which prescription has endowed it. The easiest chair, the warmest corner, the shade in summer, the rare sun-gleam in the winter—none of these things will an ingenuous youth grudge to the man to whom has befallen what youth cannot help regarding as the calamity of having grown old. One privilege no one would think of denying them. It is the privilege of experience. They have lived long, therefore they are wise, is a common thought, if not a common argument; for men constantly mistake the mere possession of experience for the attainment of wisdom. Even when we do not see the wisdom, we bethink us that no wisdom can be expected to be always in action, and we give the old man credit for a certain latent wisdom that may, at the proper time, produce the most marvellous results. In many cases the wisdom is so latent that it never comes

to the surface. But what of that? The old man may be a pauper so far as actual wisdom is concerned; but we allow him credit for wisdom he ought to have acquired. I suppose young people are thus consciously credulous because they have a sort of notion that in this way they are bolstering up the comfortable theory that, by merely living to be old themselves, they will evidently grow wise.

It is true enough that there is no man who lives long, who does not, by the mere fact of having lived, acquire a decided advantage over those who are younger. No matter how carelessly a man may have sauntered through life, there are scenes that cling to his memory, and maxims that stick upon his tongue; and, above all, there is around him an atmosphere of reverence created expressly in his behoof by the imagination of those who are so young as to think that gray hairs and wisdom are inseparable: and all these things give him a decided personal advantage over younger men. In fact, if he only sit quietly, and say little, and shake his gray head at intervals so regular that some of the shakings must, on any doctrine of chances, be to the purpose, there is no kind of social superiority that he may not tacitly assume—*tacitly*, I say, for senile garrulity is fatal to reverence.

But though all this be true, it is true, too, that to live long is not necessarily to grow wise. The keen-toothed proverb avers that "there is no fool like the old fool." The truth is, unless a man be, so to speak, congenitally wise, he will never attain to wisdom. Unless he have within himself the root of wisdom, he will never wear its flower. Truer of the wise man than even of the poet is the dictum, "*Nascitur non fit.*"

Time and its passing will not help a fool: nay, do not time and long practice give facility to folly as to other things? No amount of experience can make a man wise who has not at the outset an inherent capability of wisdom, just as no amount of study will make a scholar out of a blockhead. But people expect otherwise. Above all, parents have large faith in time, and seem to be under the conviction that foolish sons, and unwise daughters, if only they live to be of legal age, will awake some morning and find themselves wise. But if to-day does not make a man wise, how shall it make him wise merely by becoming yesterday—and that is all time does for some people, turns their to-days into yesterdays.

No, I repeat, experience alone is not wisdom. There is an experience that consists in a knowledge of an indefinite number of facts, that a man must necessarily accumulate by living a number of years. But such experience is very compatible with unwisdom, nay, even with downright foolishness. Not to speak at once of individuals, take the world, or that portion of it that dubs itself with the title of "civilised society." It is certain that the "world" has a vast amount of accumulated experience, and a very perfect adjustment of means for making that experience subservient to the purposes of life. But will anyone maintain that the "world" grows better, or nobler, or wiser for all its knowledge? Knowledge, to be sure, is power, but it is power in a very raw state; and a very subtle process, needing very complex mental and moral machinery, is required before the raw material can be worked up to the condition of a serviceable fabric. Before that process takes place, mere knowledge is like money in the

hands of a miser, who knows how to hoard but has not learned to use. The world seems to me to have acquired more knowledge than it can put to good account; and I believe that unused knowledge is a very unsafe mental possession. There is such a thing as knowing too much, just as there is such a thing as eating too much; and the illustration, homely though it be, has the advantage of helping to explain what I mean by too much knowledge. All knowledge is too much which a man cannot digest and assimilate by processes of acting and feeling. Undigested and unassimilated knowledge may increase the mental bulk, but it will certainly diminish the mental power, until a voracious reader may attain surely and soon to a chronic state of fatty degeneration of the intellect.

If you happened to have some social or moral problem affecting your own conduct, your first and most natural impulse would be to bring it for solution before some one whose reputed knowledge on such subjects makes him be regarded as an expert. But you get no serviceable solution. He is oppressed with the mass of his own knowledge. He cannot give a plain answer, for qualifications keep rushing in upon him from every point of the compass. He sees so many possible roads out of the difficulty that he cannot bring himself to point out one rather than another; and, in any case, caring far more for the problem than for you, his decision, if given at all, will be too abstract to allow you easily to give it the desired practical concreteness.

You then cast about for other help, and take your case to a friend, who, with a hundred times less knowledge, has a thousand times more sympathy. He soon



either finds a road or makes one. Indeed, for this kind of royal road-making, there is no man so serviceable as the man of one idea. He may be wrong, indeed often is, but he is terribly effective.

Something, however, of all this of which I have been speaking is due not less to difference of mental constitution than to difference in the amount of acquired knowledge. There are minds that always move in straight lines from point to point. They are intellectually possessed with the axiom that a straight line is the shortest road between two points. They see where they are, and whither they wish to go, and they go there by the shortest path. It sounds well. Their mental position is mathematically unassailable; but such a condition of mind has its own drawback. It is this: these men are completely ruthless in their onward stride. No sentiment can stay them, and even though a fact should lie in wait for them, and start up like an armed man to bar their progress, they murder it (the softer word is *suppress*), and pass on triumphant to the goal. These are the minds that seem to themselves to see things so clearly that anyone who does not see them precisely so must fall into either unpleasant category, mentally blind or perversely obstinate. To differ from them in opinion is to insult them, to argue is to exasperate them.

Other minds there are that move in curves of greater or less arc, sometimes after such fashion as to suggest the idea of a progress backwards. They are what I may call parenthetic minds, looking before them, to be sure, but casting sharp glances to the right and to the left, often leaving the road of direct statement to hunt up a qualification of little or no practical importance,

and hating above all things to leave a general proposition for a single moment without the modification of its possible exceptions.

It is familiar to every observer of men how little effectual is mere knowledge as a motive of action. It is true that we are so constituted that, until we know, we cannot will, much less act, in the direction of our wishes. But with the majority of men there lies between knowing and doing a gulf that is so seldom passed that it seems impassable. The truth is, knowledge must be transmuted into feeling before its latent force can be elicited.

How many things we know, and rest satisfied with merely knowing, till the wisest of us seem, like moral geographers, capable of mapping whole territories of human life, and yet rest satisfied with seeing the various lines stretch out into paths of one duty or another, and never take a step to travel the course we have mapped out so skilfully. Indeed, who so keen in his discernment of error as he who has been its victim? Who so accurate in pointing out a pitfall as he who bears upon his garments the smirch and stain of its lowest depth? Who so loud in denouncing a fault as he whose inner consciousness tells him that every moment he is on the verge of committing it?

I have remarked that in these matters a man's strongest opinions often cover and indicate his weakest points. The world is prompt to call a man a hypocrite who denounces a fault into which he himself is prone to fall; but the world is too summary in many of its judgments. Such men are not always hypocrites. In many cases another explanation is truer and more charitable. Conscience has a clear eye, and spies out

the weakest point of the fortress within which it sits ; and it is to the defence of this point that the instinct of moral self-preservation mainly tends. So it often happens that there is nothing against which a man will think himself so strongly bound to inveigh as against something that he feels he might easily be guilty of himself. Nine people out of ten would call this sheer hypocrisy, but in nine cases out of ten it might be no such thing. It is often a desperate effort on the part of a sorely-tempted man to enlist his better self against his worse, to give such hostages of expressed opinion as may force him for very shame to fight a good fight in the day of temptation—to use the present against the future. Every such expression of strong opinion seems to him a bastion of the fortress within which he hopes bravely to stand the siege of passion. Don't blame him overmuch. He may fall by-and-by, may do the very thing he denounced so vigorously ; but never believe he was necessarily a hypocrite all along. He was inconsistent, as most men are. There was a discrepancy between word and work, but surely such discrepancy is not uncommon. He strove to place a barrier of spoken words between him and some secretly dreaded evil. He broke the barrier down, or leaped over it afterwards ; but, when he built it, he may have been meaning honestly enough. The worst of it is, in such cases, that men not only express those strong opinions that cover weak points, but they are prone to seek and select illustrations from their neighbour's conduct. Better it were, and more becoming, if they confined themselves to the abstract ; but it is only to philosophic minds that the purely abstract has any charm. Most people not being philosophers, see what-

ever they do see in the concrete, and this concrete lies far more convenient, for purposes of inspection, in our neighbours than in ourselves.

The lines are very witty, no doubt, about "Compounding for sins we are inclined to, by damning those we have no mind to." Of course the practice is common enough to make the lines perennially quotable, but it is a coarse measure, and suits only coarser spirits. There are men of finer mould and more sensitive fibre, who are haunted by their own proclivities—above all, the ghost of dead and gone facts of their own experience are never laid—and these men are prone to denunciation of the vices to which these proclivities tend. I know the world has peculiarly hard measure for those who preach and do not practice; but for my part, I think them quite as good, at all events, as the more astute class, who preach up the virtues they find easy to themselves, and denounce the vices to which they have no temptation. A lecture against theft is a good thing, a lecture against intemperance is a good thing; but if the former be delivered by a man with ten thousand a year, and the latter by a confirmed dyspeptic, while willing to give each of them credit for sincerity and the best possible intentions, I should be slow to base my estimate of the total moral force of their characters upon the excellence either of their words or of their example, so far as it merely illustrated the matters to which these words referred.

It is by all means necessary to practice in order that preaching may be effective; but the practice must be quite up, not merely to the letter, but to the spirit of the preaching. Who would tolerate a tirade against tobacco-smoking by a confirmed snuff-taker, or a

denunciation of drunkenness by a notorious gourmand?

The step from knowing to doing is rarely taken, because the preliminary step is rarely taken from knowing to feeling. This is, perhaps, the reason of the fact that at first sight looks inexplicable, that a man may have lived to be very old, and yet have acquired very little real experience either of himself or of others, or of the world around him. He has had, as it were, casual possession from time to time of innumerable facts, but he could never be said to have accumulated them. He may have had a faculty of acquiring facts, but he lacked the rarer faculty of keeping them together; and, like the cognate class that can earn but cannot save, he may be as poor at seventy as he was at seven-and-twenty. Facts enough have occurred to him, as, indeed, they occur to everyone, to serve for the construction of a whole philosophy of life; but because they were mere facts without coherence, such a philosophy is to him not only impossible of achievement, but even inconceivable in thought. And what is it, you will ask, that makes the facts of life cohere, thus rendering philosophy and wisdom possible? What is it that makes solid knowledge melt into feeling, and then boil up to the point at which feeling passes into that ethereal vapour which, far more wonderful than steam, sets a-working the machinery both of mind and body? The secret is one, and only one. It is sympathy—fellow-feeling for those whom our experience brings within our range of vision. Dig however you may the gold of knowledge, if you will have it serve for profitable use, it must have on it the stamp of love. No one knows men until he loves them.



Most men have some sympathies, but they are limited in their range—whole classes of men and things lie outside the magic circle. When our knowledge of anything is quickened by the keen feeling of its bearing on our own personal interest, then, because we are never without a fellow-feeling for ourselves, knowledge is prompt to rush into action. It is a pity we cannot state the facts of our own experience in the terms of other people's feelings; but such statement would be the last result of perfect wisdom. No art so rare, yet none so fraught with rich result, as the art of putting ourselves in the place of others. Not, mark you well, in the sense of attributing to them our own precise modes of being affected by a particular thing—than which I know no more fertile cause of mistaken opinion and mistaken action—but in the sense of being able to separate in our own mood that element which is merely personal from that which is broadly human, and then estimating the effect of the latter upon others who, whatever differences there may be between us, are, at all events, as human as ourselves. No man was ever wise who had not attained to sympathy with others. As no man is always wise, so no man is wise in all things; and if you examine well, you will find that the things in which he is not wise are precisely the things in the direction of which his sympathies have not been cultivated.

For the fellow-feeling a man cultivates towards others, nature returns him a hundredfold by opening into his life, and through his life into his character and his soul, a thousand fertilising streams which flow, indeed, perennial in that vast circle of infinity that surrounds every human life, but which can find no entrance into the

soul save by those channels that are formed by a man's sympathies with his fellow-men.

You will find men who travel from Dan to Bersheeba, from the cradle to the grave, and find all barren. Nothing interests them, nothing attracts them ; their surroundings are commonplace, their lives a languid endurance. They expect little, because they are themselves prepared to give nothing. Friendship is a myth, affection a day-dream. Their neighbours are "poor creatures," because they cannot believe their neighbours to be other than themselves. What is the matter with these unhappy men, whose life is a long disease? The matter is, that they have no sympathies with the beings and things around them. They have drawn about their lives a fatal circle that isolates them from their fellows. They see in all the wide world only themselves. Other men pass before them, but they are as figures in a dream, utterly unsubstantial and unrelated. All the while the world they found barren is full of interest and of beauty, irrigated by streams that have their source in the very throne of God, bathed in sunshine, musical with song. There are men to help and to be helped—interests, feelings, affections, from which, as from the chords of some sweet instrument, the touch of human intercourse can draw most exquisite music. How shall the blind see these things—how shall the deaf hear? I answer, by cultivating sympathy with others ; for sympathy can be created where it did not exist, can be fostered where it was languid, can be strengthened even where it was already strong. There are many ways, but try just this one. You will soon sympathise with those you serve. Be of use to men, and you will learn to love them. Help others,

and the help you give shall return into your own heart—shall exalt, shall enrich it. The world that was barren shall begin to bloom with beauty, shall present itself to your purified vision as it was meant to be, and as it is—the garden of God, where the Father loves to walk with his children, helping them, and pleased to see them helping each other.

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### XIX.—EPISCOPUS LOQUITUR.

YES, that's the colour, true episcopal  
Purple ; too costly for a man like me,  
Who little values perishable things,  
That minister to the body's vanity.  
But, not alone the dove's simplicity,  
But also serpent's prudence guides the Church  
Thro' tortuous windings of the human heart.  
She knows, and I, her bishop, know thro' her  
How by man's eye, the heart of man is caught,  
How, therefore, purple, which my heart disdains,  
Befits the man who bears the load I bear,  
Whose lowly personal tastes must aye be laid  
A sacrifice on the altar which he serves.

Here, I repeat, the colour that befits,—  
Purple, not less than royal, nay, far more,  
For high as archèd heaven above the earth,  
So high Christ's bishops over earthly kings.  
Even the lowliest bishop of all those

Whose hands wield crosier, and whose mitred fronts  
Are lifted o'er the golden battlements  
To bid defiance to the foes of Christ.

And who *is* lowliest?—Who, O Lord, but I,  
Whom nothing but thy gracious hand could raise  
To such a height of perilous dignity.  
Thy hand it was, then let it be thy care  
To have, thro' me, thy blessed will fulfilled,  
Even thro' me, for, howsoever weak,  
Thou saw'st *some* fitness, or Thou wouldst not choose.  
And if men lift themselves in pride, and think  
They fight my folly, 'tis with Thee they fight.  
Thou know'st it, Lord, then give my hand the strength  
To smite them as thy enemies should be smote.

From me, a man, to Thee, O Lord, is due  
All that's summed up into the single word  
Humility ; but not the less from them  
Are reverence and obedience due to me.  
I may judge wrongly ; tho' I feel upborne  
In my decisions, by thy grace that fits  
Weak instruments like me to high designs.  
And tho' I *be* wrong, yet I feel no taint  
Of self, in any judgment, spoiling it.  
And, say I *am* wrong, *they* must still be right  
In following where the appointed leader leads,  
For mine it is to rule, theirs to be ruled.

And yet—(I but recall it as a proof  
How Satan strives to turn e'en holiest things  
To purposes unholy, and to cast  
His poison on the very source of life)

And yet, my confessor of late begins  
To scatter doubtful counsels, and to strive  
To turn me from my purpose—which is thine—  
Says, "That when impulses of honest hearts,  
And the calm wisdom of clear, honest heads  
Are all borne down by sheer authority,  
Authority had need revise its use."  
As if these hearts, tho' honest, were not made  
More precious in thy sight when trodden down,  
In wine-press whence thy saints come forth blood red.  
As if these heads, tho' clear, would not receive  
A larger light by veiling reason's light  
Before the burning lustre of thy law.  
(And who, if not thy bishops, have thy law?)  
As if or honest head, or honest heart  
Could still, by honest men, be honest held,  
Refusing in their blindness to obey.

I take, O Lord, thy word, thy two-edged sword  
Into my hand; first, let me smite myself.  
With it I cut my very self in twain—  
On one side falls the man, the wretch, the *I*  
That clutches at the life of every act  
Of any worth anointed hands can do.  
This man *who* loathes intenselier than I loathe?  
His pride, his pomp, his weakness and his sin—  
(And yet, O Lord, Thou know'st e'en *he* has striven  
To make him less unworthy of the load  
Thy wisdom deem'd it fit to lay on him).  
I loathe him, let him grovel in the dust,  
And lick the dust that feeds humility;  
But, grovelling, leave still standing in thy sight  
The other self—thy work, O Lord, not man's,



With mitred brow, and crosier firmly grasp'd  
To do thy purpose as he holds thy power.  
They smite the man—'tis meet he turns his face  
That both sides take their due ; but if he held  
*Thy* pictured image, were it meet to turn  
*That* to the hand that aims, thro' it, at Thee ?  
And is he less thine image, since a man  
Whom Thou hast rais'd till his unworthy head,  
However lowly, mitred, touches heav'n.

Poor simple man, he knows not bishop's work,  
Nor how the hand, anointed to that work,  
Must weed from it the man's humility,  
Lest it o'ergrow the crop of thy designs.

I pray, teach, preach, as thy apostle warns,  
" In season, out of season," spend myself  
Upon this flock, oft ingrate, which thy hand  
Hath plac'd beneath my crosier to be ruled.  
I pray—who dares to whisper that my pray'r  
(I only put base rumour into words)  
Is as the pray'r of those, not few, whose pray'r  
Is but direction subtly given to God,  
Who seek to form the Changeless on the will  
That floats like wavering mists from human hearts.

" Who seeks shall find," and if I, seeking, find  
Thy will, as 'twere the echo of my pray'r,  
The voice and echo both alike are Thine ;  
What marvel if God's bishop thinks God's will ?

## XX.—ABOUT SELF-POSSESSION.

FROM a very early period wisdom has been in the habit of expressing itself in the form of proverb. There is a certain convenience in packing truth into such small parcels. It becomes portable even to the weakest intelligence, and finds a place in minds too small for the accommodation of more pretentious forms of philosophy. Hence it comes that proverbs form the stock-in-trade of commonplace people, and have this strange destiny, that, whereas in the case of the person who invented them they are generally the quintessence or very severe and accurate thought, they become in the case of persons who use them machines for saving the labour of thinking at all. It is only, however, by thinking over that the wisdom that is in them can be made available. Truth has been packed so closely that it has become somewhat compressed in the process, and if you will have it serve to any useful purpose you must unpack it again by a course of thinking of your own. There was an ambitious attempt to express a great deal in a very limited compass, and like ambitious attempts generally, it ends in failure.

The proverb I have in mind just now, and that suggested what I have been saying, is this: "Extremes meet." And of a surety they do meet, and meet to such purpose that not unfrequently they are looked upon as identical. But they are extremes for all that, and it is at the very point of contact in which they do

meet that their most essential difference can be detected.

What, for instance can be more extreme than Zeno the Stoic on the one hand, and Lord Dundreary on the other? Yet each might take for his motto, "*nil admirari*." If Zeno, by a long course of philosophic discipline, has schooled himself into indifference, Lord Dundreary has, by occult processes of nature, arrived at a condition which, if not the same, is yet sufficiently like it to deceive a superficial observer. The condition in which these extremes meet may in both cases take the name of self-possession; but in the one case it has been arrived at deliberately, and by a highly intellectual process of suppression of very keen emotions, and wide-spreading sympathies; in the other it has arisen chiefly from the fact that there is neither emotion nor sympathy to suppress, nor any intellectual force to suppress them if there were. Let us try and take some account of these two kinds of self-possession, and we shall then be in a position both to appraise them more accurately and to find out what it is they have in common that brings them under the category of extremes that meet.

There is a self-possession that is merely superficial. It takes hold of the manners rather than of the man, and is expressed by behaviour rather than by thought or character. You will find it any day, in any drawing-room, doing work excellent of its kind, even though that kind be not the highest or the most sublime. You will find it abolishing awkwardness, smoothing asperities of character, filing down peculiarities of temperament, muffling your eccentricity that it may meet mine without the shock of collision. Society is an elaborate

system of "give and take," and the giving and taking are more nicely balanced in proportion as the actors are sufficiently self-possessed to take command of circumstances and not allow circumstances to take command of them. To have such command even over ordinary circumstances gives claim to the title of a self-possessed man; but to have equal command over extraordinary circumstances is to be a great man. But neither great men nor self-possessed men are common.

The man of the street is dominated by circumstance. He can be played upon by every passing incident as if he were an instrument, which, indeed, he is, albeit seldom very musical or melodious. Jostle him, and he is apt to swear; touch him with a personal criticism, and he will retort in kind, more anxious in his retort to give as good as he got than to frame his phrase according to the exigencies of special relevance. A passing "Punch" delights him; a street row is quite a treat; any show or spectacle will, for the moment, secure an attention that is never so much engaged as on the look-out for an engagement. The man has no possession of himself. There seems to be no principle of intellectual movement within him. He waits, and must wait, for impulse from without. He is not an organism that absorbs external circumstance and assimilates it, but an unorganised mass that receives external circumstance as a mere accretion, the accumulation of which rather conceals him than enables him to display his real self.

But the man, and, still more, the woman of the drawing-room are so different that a philosophic visitor from a neighbouring planet might be excused if on cursory

examination he were to class them as different species. The difference is, these latter have acquired more or less control over ordinary circumstances. If the circumstances be extraordinary, the common human nature is apt to peep through in most cases. Should the house go on fire, or the carriage horses run away, the habitual self-possession of even the finest of fine ladies will break down temporarily.

There is one circumstance incidental to human life which one might call ordinary enough, but which, nevertheless, has a very disturbing effect upon average mortals, even though they happen to be of more than average social culture. It is the circumstance of death. It comes to everyone in his turn; it is the most certain of all things, yet few can receive it without being a good deal shaken out of even the most inveterately habitual self-possession. But, then, it may be remembered that though death is one of the common things of the world, though no day comes that does not bring its list of dead, and leave its line of graves; yet to you, and to me, our own deaths shall be the most uncommon thing that ever happened to us in the whole course of our lives.

Abstracting from the spiritual aspects of death, and taking it as a mere physical fact, most people die much after the same fashion. There is something hurried about it, no matter how long it may seem to have been coming. The exit made in a hurry can scarcely be dignified, and hurry of all kinds is an enemy to self-possession. Even if the superficial self-possession of the dying man be not shaken as the supreme instant approaches, it is probably because he has no real notion that the supreme instant is so alarmingly near. Besides,



nature has her anodynes and her soporifics. She drops her poppy-juice upon one sense and upon another. She drugs the memory. She gently puts out one after one all the lights of life. The patient goes to sleep piecemeal, and is stolen away so lapped in slumber that he does not feel the unrelenting pressure of the hand that is drawing him away to the great reality that lies beyond these shadows. When we were children we had all a child's reluctance to go to bed betimes, and then the mother took us into her lap, and with lullaby or legend beguiled our weary eyelids into gentle slumber, which, once established, we were laid unconscious in our little beds. So one day shall mother Nature lull us into that sleep that knows no waking, and lay us in the narrow bed, and leave us to such dreams as we have deserved.

The self-possession of which I speak has command over ordinary circumstances. It does good work, but is in itself no very valuable thing, still less is it a certain guarantee of greatness or nobility of character. It may be found quite apart from the finest attributes of human nature, may, in fact, be only the smile-like ripple upon a prevailing current of worthlessness. The best thing about it is that it always implies a certain amount of self-restraint which, however trivial the objects about which it is exercised, or however mean the motive that prompts it, is always very desirable as a habit. Self-restraint is, so far as it goes, a discipline that affords a fine basis for any possible future.

If there be a science of this self-possession, its first principle would be, "*nil admirari*." It is a principle repressive of human emotion, good, bad, and indifferent. or, at all events, repressive of their outward expression.

When this principle is thoroughly apprehended, and thoroughly absorbed into character, I cannot say it makes its votaries more amiable. There is, and must be, in a perfect exposition of it, a touch of the sardonic that unpleasantly affects ordinary mortals. It gives a sense of power, but of a power somewhat malign in its tendency. What a perfect gentleman, in the world's sense of the word, was, nay is (for is he not immortal?) Mephistopheles. Quiet and self-possessed, not unpleasantly eager even in his relentless seeking for the soul of Faust. Determined, to be sure, to have it in due time, but, meanwhile, too much of a gentleman to make a fuss before the time came.

However, there is a nobler kind of self-possession that comes of well-digested experience, and that can co-exist with warm feelings and keen sympathies, nay, even with that enthusiasm which, if latent, is not on that account the less, but the more effective. A man finds himself, so to speak, an inhabitant of two worlds, the world without and the world within. It is a condition of perfect sanity that a man live a little in both. If he live exclusively in the one or in the other he will lose his balance. In the one case he will become a lunatic, will, "see men as trees walking;" in the other, he will become a fribble and a trifler, carried hither and thither by every wind of circumstance. Even should a man so live in both these worlds as to preserve the minimum of sanity that is indispensable to a rational being, he may have his predilection for one over the other, and it is certain that the development of his character will depend for its direction on the precise co-relation he establishes between the two. It is all in all in a man's history whether he has possession

of himself or whether he is under the dominion of circumstance. Circumstance is, as it were, the outer world incarnate, and there is no doubt but it wages continual warfare to secure exclusive possession of the human soul.

If a man have possession of himself, he enjoys a liberty of which nor sword nor chain can deprive him. To such a spirit, "stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." The world may fall in ruins about him, but he, just and strong of purpose, will remain self-possessed. On the other hand, what charter won by blade of sword and sealed by hilt of dagger can bestow freedom upon the man who is at the beck and bidding of every chance circumstance that befalls.

But a man may learn by living, if he be capable of learning. Time and nature are continually bringing to men lessons of more than sibylline wisdom. But a lesson once rejected is rarely presented again; and even should nature over and over teach it to the full, time is perpetually destroying the opportunities of putting it to use. There is no lesson time teaches better worth learning than the value of a day. Few know it. Either they underrate it or overrate it; most probably they do both under different aspects. It is one of the illusions that we think of great things only in connection with large spaces of time. But the really great things are done on individual days. At the root of the greatest of deeds is a great thought, and that thought sprang full grown into the world on some one day, nay, at some one moment. Everything else followed in time, but everything else was included in the thought, so that having once brought himself (and it needed preparation) to the pitch of thinking this thought, the

thinker might have rested as men rest after seed-sowing in the spring-time. The great things that were not done on individual days were, and remained, mere day-dreams. Now, if we only knew the real value of a day, nothing would more contribute to put us in possession of ourselves. Most of the perturbations of the human spirit come either from too persistent brooding over the past or from too anxious solicitude about the future. In either case the day is robbed of a portion of the force that had no profitable use save to be spent in its service. Once a man fully realises that he can mould only the day he has, or if other days, only through it, he will begin both to take things easily and to do them well, and these two have a closer connection than most people seem to imagine.

There is no way in which life-force is more certainly wasted than when it is expended in bemoaning the irremediable and in resisting the inevitable. Yet there are numbers of people who do both; people who seem to think that the never-resting shadow will go back upon the dial as many degrees as they please if only they shout their lamentation loud enough; people who imagine that Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos will undo the web they have woven, and submit their decrees to some court of appeal that will be moved to reverse them by a strong expression of mortal discontent. It is a great part of wisdom to find out where sorrow ceases to be useful and when resistance becomes mere folly. To find out this is like stanching some artery through which life was gently ebbing away. Even a creature so low in the scale as an insect can teach one a lesson. Place before it an impassable barrier; it will first try to get over it. Perhaps in its minute mind it

has some ambitious idea of the possibility of pushing the obstacle aside by main force. But it can neither push it aside nor get over it. Then what is the next best thing? Why it seeks a passage on one side or the other, or if all fails it turns back; that is, mark you, it recognises the full meaning of the obstacle. And if it did not it might wear its antennæ to the stumps and never get any further. The man who most vividly realises a difficulty is the man who is most likely to overcome it; and if it be unconquerable, the man who first recognises that it is so, is the man to whom defeat only serves to suggest a way to a wider victory all the more decisive because it was deferred.

The secret of all power is—save your force. If you want high pressure you must choke off waste. A great waste cock is speech. You can let off by talking any amount of steam that will merely serve to the formation of vapoury clouds, which, catching the sunshine of youth and hope, look beautiful enough, but have nothing substantial in them, and contribute largely to the chances of a wet and dismal evening. Under most circumstances silence is, to say the least, safe. It is besides, a great saving of force. People will tell you, and I have no doubt but they believe it, that it is a relief to cry out under suffering; but, even as an anodyne, complaint is of questionable value. It is like some of the drugs that give momentary surcease of pain at the cost of such general lowering of vitality as makes after-pain more intolerable. Pain is best borne in silence. Let instinct itself give you a lesson. Should you chance to put your finger on hot iron your first instinctive movement—try the experiment, if you please—will be to clap the burnt finger into your



mouth. Is it not as if nature herself, consulting for both your dignity and your well-being, were trying to hinder you from screaming?

Thoughtful men, especially if circumstances have placed them a little apart on the skirts of life's great battle, soon come to perceive through what an exaggerating medium the keen strugglers see the objects of their desires. In vast dimension and gorgeous colouring the object looms before their eager vision, but size and colour are given by the eye, not existing in the thing. As experience widens, one begins to see how much upon a level all human things are. In the vast sweep of the earth's curve the difference between ant-hill and Andes is scarcely appreciable. Time disenchantments the votaries of every shrine. Head of gold but feet of clay, and even the gold only the glinting of sunflash or gleaming of moonshine, is the history of all the idols. What yesterday was the one thing to make us happy, to-day we would not stoop for if it lay at our feet. It is said that, in most cases, what youth wishes eagerly age will bring in abundance. It may be so, but even realised wishes do not always mean happiness. Views change, points of views are different. Every year, or every lustrum at all events, there is a new ideal so mighty that it enforces, so jealous that it exacts the breaking up and burning of all the ideals that have gone before. Besides, the longer we live the more we learn to revise our estimates. What seemed a very crisis in the happening has proved barren of result, while the real crisis came, so to speak, in the night, and went its way unrecognised. Darkness hangs upon the turning points. As we till the field, not the seeds only that we planted come up in due season, but

other seeds sown by an enemy while we slept—and who is a man's worst enemy?—spring up to surprise and to pain us. Again, most of the people we lived amongst seem to have had little or no influence upon our lives, while some stranger who merely looked us once in the face, and spoke, and passed, has his influence woven into the very texture of our fate. We need not look beyond our own hearts to find great schemes come to nothing, and deep-laid plans frustrated, and, on the other hand, the direction of life falling into the hands of what, from impatience of exhaustive analysis, we are content to call chance. No truth we may sooner learn if we will than the two-sided truth that, like the shield in the fable, seems a contradiction till it is examined on all sides: "Nothing is important, everything is of importance." Life is made up of trifles, but their sum total is a human destiny. A fortress is no stronger than its weakest point, and if it have a weak point the enemy will be sure to find it out. One or other weak strand in an anchor rope does not seem of much consequence, but it is precisely upon that the storm will press with greatest force in the hour of peril. What, you may well say, is the drift of all this? Well, all these things seem to me to teach a certain wise fatalism that will conduce to the suppression of fuss and to the growth of self-possession. A *wise* fatalism, not the fatalism that expresses itself by apathy, but that which gives the spring to exertion; not the fatalism of the man who tills no land and sows no seed, and then complains that fate will give no harvest; but the fatalism of the man who believes that he, too, his strong right arm, his contriving brain, is a part, and no small part, of fate; and ploughs and sows, and

having done his part, sits quietly knowing two things, one, that having done his part the other forces needful for result are by no means likely to fail; the other, that harvest-time will be no surer, nor will it come a day sooner, though he were to worry the world talking about it and fussing about it.

The human mind in its best specimens has always highly appreciated a certain kind of quietism, under the influence of which a man might sit, as it were, apart (the Stoics gave him a throne, and called him a king), and, unvexed by the storms of passion and untroubled by the currents of emotion, might manage his life and his affairs. And at all times, consciously or unconsciously, men seek their quietism, and seek it in ways as various as the social conditions that surround them. The Stoic sought it by hard paths, and ruthlessly trampled down the flowers of life that he might reach the goal and sit crowned monarch over a loveless and a hopeless world. The Red Indian, too, had his ideal, and deemed that he had attained it when deliberate apathy touched his tortured lips with a silence that anticipated and prefigured the silence of death. Poets seek refuge in the rapture, like a dream within a dream, that enfolds the human spirit, that can fuse hard reality in the liquid fire of song. Even the fop has some notion of the fascination of quietism, and in the *poco-curantism* of his languid drawl will ape the manners of the man, "*justum ac tenacem propositi*." In fact, men who have thought over the matter, and men who have not, steadily set themselves to resist the irruptions which the outer world, condensed under the name of circumstance, is continually making upon the world within. There is the problem—Circumstance

is lying in wait to rob me of myself : how to prevent the robbery? And men of all classes answer with one word, however different may be the meaning they severally attach to it—"By self-possession."

What is at the bottom of this likeness that makes in this matter extremes meet, or seem to meet? Whence comes this almost universal belief in the charm of quietism? Nature teaches it, is always teaching it. Calmness and composure are the natural manners, and very striking manners they are, of power. The force, both vital and mechanical, that is at work on any single day of spring, sending the sap through the tree from root to bud-mark, making the grass sprout up in all the fields, is simply incalculable by any process within the reach of the human intellect. Yet all goes on in the most absolute silence. Can you hear the grass grow, or the flower gathering bloom, or the seedling breaking its case and despatching its messenger to bore up to the daylight, or the riot and convulsion of growth of which the myriad buds upon the hedge-rows are the certain tokens? Universally it seems to be the case, that quietude, or, if motion, then intensely silent motion, gives the impression of immense power. What is noiseless is strong. Force expended in the mere production of noise is force wasted. It is so much lost to the main end of power. What takes hold of the world like light, and yet what ever comes so quietly as the silent footsteps of the dawn? Would the sunrise be any the more impressive, nay, would it not soon grow less impressive if it were ushered in every morning by thunder pealing down the eastern hills? In the very centre of the cyclone—the nucleus around which gathers

its terrific force—there is one spot where the flame of a taper would not be shaken. Before the thunder crashes upon the ear, the lightning has rent its passage through the living rock. Or, see some vast piece of machinery at work, is not your idea of its enormous power enlarged by the fateful deliberateness and the absolute absence of anything like fuss with which it does its work?

And we ourselves are microcosms. The world is incarnate in us. All its secrets are told in our organisation. Its laws reproduce themselves in our thoughts and in our history. Nay, in man all worlds meet, and the universe fulfils itself. Matter and spirit, the extreme results of creative power, meet and make a man. Hence it is never wonderful that a law of nature or a custom of the physical world should have its counterpart in the world of mind and of morals. The quiet manner is the effective manner. This man is not moved by what moves you; you begin to suspect in him a larger mass of mind. A force that touching you produces a spasm of emotion, has on him no apparent effect. Forthwith you begin to have a conviction that the emotional force that is lost to you by the very act of expression is hoarded up by him for worthier uses; and that from such hoardings his stock of latent force is quite beyond your conjecture. You credit him with a larger knowledge and a finer experience because, even in a crisis that marks for you the shouting point, he preserves all the composure of a man whose resources are, if not inexhaustible, at all events unexhausted.

Even superficial self-possession will, at first sight



produce something of this impression. It may not be quite a correct impression. There may not be under it all, or nearly all that you imagine. But all the same, fine manners have their inevitable influence, and place the man who has them at an advantage in the presence of the man who lacks them. That is, however, until some crisis comes that transcends the ordinary, and calls not for manners but for a man. When it comes to a hand-to-hand fight with nature for the daily bread, then manners are apt to go to the wall. Then a man courts circumstance, and cringes to it, not commands it. The mere struggler for bread has no time to sit down and possess himself or anything. Everyone of his days that are, or that are to be, presents itself to his imagination as a possible loaf. Meantime the children cry for supper, and he must work, work, work. His manners are—and is it any wonder?—the manners of scramble not of leisure.

It may be said that self-possession is a delusive quality, that it may be a mere mask concealing very real perturbation and disquiet. But I answer that disquiet and perturbation so masked ceased to be their ugly selves. They are subdued by the self-possession that looks them in the face. A man may be startled at night by an unexpected apparition. If he have courage to go up to it, and examine it, he will find merely a scooped turnip into which the waggish boys have put a candle end. But let him run away, and he will carry to his grave an ineradicable conviction that he has seen a ghost. Besides, a little observation will teach anyone that where there is real weakness the weakling seeks to hide it, not by calmness but by bluster.

There is, indeed, as I have more than once hinted, a self-possession that has its root deep in character, and a self-possession that is only superficial. Between these, in their external manifestation, it may seem impossible to distinguish. But it is impossible only to superficial observers. It is in these as in other things, not so much by flower or foliage, but "by their fruits shall you know them." The two classes that seem most unmoved by the spectacle of human suffering are, the heartless and the helpful; yet how infinitely different, and with quite an ascertainable difference, is the unemotional gloating of the tyrant over the suffering he inflicts, and that deliberate suppression of emotion that guides the hand of a skilled surgeon to the removal of human pain. It is in what a man does rather than in what he feels or expresses that his real quality is discernible. Feeling may be an indication of tendency, but only in act do we find tendency realised. The man who loudliest blows the horn is the very man most likely to spoil it in the process of converting it into the serviceable spoon.

The self-possession worth having comes only from just estimates of life, both of the life that is, and that which is to come. The statesman boasted that he had called into existence a new world to redress the balance of the old. It was glittering rhetoric, but, as a matter of fact, the boast was absurd. But we in far higher sense may make the boast true for ourselves by learning to read the world around us by the light of the far more real world that lies beyond the realms of sense. What a depth of wisdom is contained in the "bookmark" of St. Theresa which my readers, even should

they thank me for nothing else, will thank me for giving them in Longfellow's translation—

“Let nothing disturb thee,  
Nothing affright thee;  
All things are passing,  
God never changeth :  
Patient endurance  
Attaineth to all things ;  
Who God possesseth,  
In nothing is wanting ;  
Alone God sufficeth.”

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## XXI.—ABOUT INDEPENDENCE.

I BEGIN by supposing that, in these countries at all events, there hardly ever was a boy into whose hands a copy of “Robinson Crusoe” has not at some time fallen, and been devoured with a mental relish that no intellectual food could bring in aftertimes. And what boy that has read it has not found rising within his youthful bosom something very like envy of the lot of the happy solitary? The book has given us stuff of which to make dreams, both night-dreams and day-dreams. Half our time we were away in some lone land, conquering unfavorable circumstances by contrivances of hand and brain, away from school-books and schoolmasters and the inevitable ferula, away from all the cares—for even boyhood has its cares—that weigh upon the youthful heart.

Looking back now, we ask ourselves where lay the charm that held us spellbound? Was it not the thorough independence of that solitary lot? There was no one to thwart the hero. He rose when he pleased, went

to bed at any hour that suited his convenience, went whithersoever he would, without anyone to question his coming or his going ; fished and hunted and worked as the mood prompted him, sweetening his existence with infinite variety ; in short, led a life so utterly free from the social fetters which civilisation rivets round the limbs of growing youth, that it is no wonder that his island has been, since Defoe first discovered it, the very paradise of boys.

The love of independence is an early passion in the human heart. We struggle to be free before we know the meaning of freedom, or could use it if it were attained. The boy forgets, indeed has not lived long enough to be capable of knowing, that the savage independence that so fascinates him, has been bought at the cost of the things best worth having on this side of the grave—at the cost of friendship and affection, and the sweet sympathies that are born of human intercourse. But, can I wonder that the boy ignores all this, when I see that most men ignore it too. A man has a hankering after independence that no slavery can eradicate. He strives after it as after a birthright. He longs for the time when he shall be independent in the fullest sense. But he was not made to be independent, for he was not meant to be alone, and so long as men live together they cannot be independent of each other. They will be bound together either by ties of mutual help or mutual harm. In fact, like many other strongly pronounced feelings, this passion for independence has its root in that selfishness that would make each man for himself the centre of the universe, and impose on all other beings the law of his own convenience. The man to whom independence becomes an absorbing aim

finds all times somewhat out of joint. Hence, it is not in any wise wonderful that strenuous seeking for independence usually involves violation of the most ordinary conditions of human happiness. Men make mistakes in the selection of their means, or even should they select these prudently, they forget they are but means, and begin to rest in them as if they were themselves the worthiest of ends.

Of course the commonest illustration of this fact is found in the men who set themselves to acquire wealth. At first, doubtless, wealth was not the ultimate end, it was only a means to other ends. Acquired wealth would give a platform from which a man might preach principles—would lift a man to the level on which great achievement was possible. Underneath the muddy current of some ignoble lives there may be hidden golden sands of earlier and better purpose; but these have long since been lost sight of and forgotten. Why, usually, does a man make haste to be rich? Is not the reason told in the very phrase by which the world designates competent wealth—"an independence?" But, often, the aspirant in seeking to be free sells himself into the bitterest bondage. He will hoard to-day that to-morrow he may spend, will fawn now that afterwards he may be free; forgetting that, like everything else, hoarding and fawning may grow into habits of which he will not be able to rid himself though he had the wealth of Cræsus.

In other things the same rule holds. A man can attain independence only by fencing himself in from others somehow—by riches, or by indifference, or some other costly device—and when the fence is made he finds it is of its own nature the straitest of prisons.



A perpetual oscillation goes on in all human things. Nothing keeps its place for a moment. Before your eyes, though you cannot see it, the limestone rock is crumbling away. What was once the mountain summit, shall one day be ground to powder in the lowest sea deeps. But, as one particle goes another takes its place, and so, in the midst of change, there is preserved an appearance of unchangeableness that is itself the greatest of illusions. But though all things oscillate, all things oscillate in a very accurate balance. They are never out of the scale—now one beam sinks, now another ; but it is always, and in all orders a true principle, and one to be taken into account, no less by the moralist than by the physicist, that it takes a pound to balance a pound. There is no tampering with the scales I speak of. God holds them, they are out of our reach. Tampering of whatever kind must confine itself to the weights ; but, though great dexterity may confuse things for a while to the eyes of bystanders, in the long run we must abide by the law, that there is no permanent way of balancing a pound on one side of the scale, except by placing a pound on the other. It is the tritest of truisms when stated as I have been stating it. But is it quite an unheard-of thing for people to ignore a truism when it makes against any pet theory or practice of their own ? There really are people who seem to think that less than a pound will balance a pound, that by a nice process of dust-throwing, they may, at all events, so blind their neighbour's eyes, as to make him see an even balance where no even balance is.

If you happen to know anything of that not innumerable class who speak more widely than they act ; who

promise largely, but fulfil little or nothing ; whose proffered aid and sympathy are largely at the service of those who have no present need of them, but are never known to be available in a real emergency—if you know anything of this class of humanity, you will guess what I mean when speaking of balances. For these people are amongst those who imagine that less than a pound will balance a pound. They set themselves to buy for mere good words, what not words, however good, but good deeds, will purchase. It is not precisely by raising hope in the breast of another that you make him your fast friend, but rather by realising any hope you may have raised. Men of the sort I describe have, at least, an average desire for what they deem the good things of life, and amongst these good things they reckon a certain degree of popularity, which accordingly they set themselves to obtain. But they will not pay the lawful price for the article. They say everything, they do nothing. They cumber with help those who need no help, but who can help them. They go about with very cheap wares, which they hope to pawn as goods of value on an unsuspecting public. They smile and they bow, sow hand-shakes broadcast amongst the multitude, say a kind thing to this one, pretend a warm interest in the affairs of this other. They think they are sowing the seeds of popularity, but the crop never ripens. Who so amazed as they, when they find after a time that nobody cares much about them, or relies on anything they say, or expects from them any service that will cost the least trouble. I have said they are amazed, they are more than that, they are indignant. They write the world down ungrateful, and call all men rogues because they were

not dupes. But the world is no fool. No dust, however skilfully thrown, will in the long run blind men to the things that nearly concern themselves. No one the world is more certain to find out, and no one the world scorns more, than the man who tries to cheat it by making empty words do duty for acts. It is the shortest-sighted of policies. The principle on which it proceeds is this : that good words cost nothing, and may, at the same time, buy things that are valuable ; but both clauses of the proposition are false. Good words cost the only thing worth having. They put in pledge the character for trustworthiness of him who utters them, and if the pledge be not redeemed they leave the utterer a moral bankrupt, and what is worse a fraudulent bankrupt. And, again, there is nothing surer, no law more inevitable in its action than this, that there is nothing for nothing. It is only another way of expressing the law of balance, that only a pound will balance a pound. Whatever I choose to have I must pay for it the price that fate itself has fixed. Success of whatever kind, whether base or noble, is only attainable as the result of achievement, and every stroke of action, of which achievement is made up, has wrought itself irrevocably into character. And as all success is concrete, and must be expressed by the formula, "success plus the person who has succeeded," it behoves a man, while making market for the success he craves, not to forget altogether that personality that must indefinitely modify any success that is attained.

There is nothing for nothing. Even the things that of all others seem gifts, given without our forethought or our asking, nay, thrust upon us without any choosing of our own, even for these, fate exacts compensation

exactly equivalent. If I am well born, "*noblesse oblige*," and I am to some extent the slave of my rank. The head of the Church becomes the "*servus servorum*." The strong and the beautiful are barred by their strength and their beauty from many not inconsiderable advantages that accompany weakness and plainness. If I am rich, I have many cares and many calls; I am poor, I have a little hunger, and great deal of ease. Fame brings the eyes of men upon him who achieves it, but it makes him more or less a public drudge with very little substantial wages, and a great deal of gratuitous criticism. A man's fame robs him of his freedom, and keeps his neck to the collar all the days of his life. Once a man becomes famous his life is never quite his own again, the sweetness of privacy is gone for ever. On the other hand, obscurity leaves a man more free, but his freedom runs in a narrow groove, and the mind contracts itself to the dimensions of the groove. Hitherto, at all events, cultivation of mind has had a rather unfavorable influence on the development of muscle, and the athletes in their turn seem to be all body.

I am fond of seeking instances in life and through nature of this law of compensation. The poets have never come to a decision as to the claims of summer or of winter. There are fine things to be said on all sides, and every side has its drawback. The glow of the fire in the ingle nook makes up for the absence of the summer glow in the sunshine. It is the same story with regard to climates, and races, and forms of government—no man has the whole loaf, only a slice that will supply the most pressing wants in what is merely a provisional order of things. There is no

getting out of the sphere of action of this law. What, then, is to be done? Make the best of it, so adjust your life, your desires, and your hopes, that the inevitable tax may fall where it can most easily be borne. Let the price deduct itself from the least necessary part of your income. Besides there is another use to be made of this law, as of every rational law. First, obey it wisely, and then find out its meaning. Find out the great central law on which it relies, from which it issues, and into which it flows back. That central law, in the present instance, is this: Justice presiding over things human and divine; a justice which, however things may appear, will have all men pretty nearly on a level; will, at all events, make them start fair, will so handicap them for the race of life that apparent inequalities are nullified. Almost the same event, or a like event, happens to every man; it is only the men to whom they happen who are not the same, who are what they have made themselves by judicious use or unwise neglect of the opportunities which their lives afforded. The sun shines on the just and on the unjust. Objectively considered it is the same sun, but in relation to the man on whom it shines it makes all the difference in the world what class he belongs to. The moral is, whatever is wrong in our lot has been wrought from within, not from without, and we have only ourselves to blame.

I have been casting about to see if there be anything in the world exempt from the action of this inexorable law of nothing for nothing. What comes from unselfishness is most likely to evade this action; selfishness being, in the long run, the most costly of all indulgences. Self-sacrifice, whether in great things or in



small, is in reality the best investment, pays best, and with least risk ; so that one might say that here, at all events, there is an advantage without any counterbalancing disadvantage. If this be so, as the root of all self-sacrifice is love for something that is not self, it would seem that such love is the one thing that escapes the tax that in other things is so inevitable that it takes the form of a law. Yet, we must be accurate in our estimate. Even here there is a price exacted. We might be sure, *a priori*, that one could scarcely succeed in lulling to sleep the dragon of selfishness, and plucking the golden fruit of the Hesperides of the heart without some trouble and some pain, something that would, so far, to the eyes of ordinary men, look so like a penalty as to make them think that even in this matter the general law met with no exception.

Life is somewhat like a voyage in a balloon. If we would ascend, we first cut the cords that held us to the base earth, and go up gently into the blue ether. But if we want to rise higher and ever higher we must throw out the sand-bags and other ballast. So, if a man will set his heart on sailing up into that pure ether where alone is perfect love, he must throw away, nor count it cost, certain impedimenta that are not to be parted without a pang. Does not the highest love of all exact sacrifices that are so heart-rending that it is next to impossible to make them? Is it not hard to hate father and mother, yea, one's own soul? Yet this is the price of that discipleship that places a man upon the heights of life. Love costs. No such benefit as it confers on life and destiny can be had without a price. Often the price is bitter tears, sometimes tears and blood.

It is true that by this perfect love a man is lifted into a region so lofty that he looks down upon the things his success costs as mere trifles, even though the world at large still deems them the very prizes of life. But this very exalted mood is itself one, and not the least, of the results of the sacrifice. It was not present when the sacrifice was being made, else sacrifice there would have been none. There was a time when father's love and mother's love were very dear. There was a time when the heart-strings, taught by blameless nature, twined around many an object not unworthy in itself. They had to be torn away, and the heart was bleeding as it went aloft. There were voices at each stage of the ascent rich with the music of human feeling that pleaded with the pilgrim soul to stay upon the lower levels where the world builds its happy homes, nor seek those summits where (says the world) men lose themselves in fantasy, and go mad with hunger for the human things they have left below. When these voices sounded, it went nigh to break the heart not to hearken. Nay, one was tempted to distrust the higher faith, and looked on every side for justification of what seemed the madness of some delusion. And these things made the cost.

But even the lower affections that aspire not to these lonely heights, even the affections that grow flowerlike beside our hearths and in our homes, even these cost not a little. Once a man loves, he gives out of his own keeping a portion of his life. Ever after his well-being and his peace depend not on himself alone. He has given hostages for whom he is compelled to tremble even when no danger assails himself. He has bound himself to others by a subtle chain, every link of which

is electric with shocks of incoming and outgoing sympathy. He may be lapped in peaceful slumber within a citadel which no foe can enter, but all the while the deadliest peril may be the lot of those outside whose lot is linked with his. He may stand secure upon the shore, gathering material for thought and poetry in the roaring of the tempest and the tumult of the sea, never weening that far out beyond the black line, where sky and sea meet to his vision, a bark may be labouring, which, if it come not safe to port, half his own life will be gone for ever. It were easy to be a Stoic where only a man's self were concerned. Poverty, hunger, death, a man may well bear for worthy causes, if only he be a man. At worst, it is only dying a few days—who knows how few—before the time. But Stoicism becomes indefinitely more difficult when it is complicated by those human relations that beget sympathy, which if it double joy by sharing it, also doubles pain by inflicting it on two.

Hunger—ay, but what if the hunger must pass, like a *donatio inter vivos*, from the father to the child, not yet capable of Stoicism on its own little account? It were hard to bear then. So, too, when poverty means, in the long working out of its results, not only bodies starved, but souls starved as well; means not only stinted food and raiment, but stinted culture and a narrowing in of the walls of life, till life seems like a prison-house; means limited opportunities of learning; means that over-estimate of daily bread, and that under-estimate of spiritual sustenance that are the standing temptations of the poor; means the cooping up of the human spirit within a circle as narrow as that which the mill-horse treads when he grinds out the

useful corn ; means that blindness to the things that ennoble life, and deafness to the sounds that make life glad—in these aspects poverty is very terrible.

All this may seem beside the subject of this lecture, yet it has a closer connection with that subject than may appear at first sight. It clears up the main condition of independence. A man can indulge his affections only by paying away a certain portion of his independence. His spirit may be free as air, he may hold his resolute purpose far beyond the reach of any torture a tyrant can inflict, but it has been, at least from the days of the Machabees, a favourite device of tyrants to torture parent through children, friend through friend. Now, a heart strong enough to let its strings be torn asunder without a cry, may grow, at the cry of a child, as weak as the heart of a woman, and that woman *not* such a one as was the mother who underwent the sevenfold martyrdom, that in the piling up of its agony was endurable only because the mother's interest in the world on this side of the grave grew gradually less, and that in the world beyond immeasurably greater as each child died.

Yes, all are vulnerable save the heartless. But who is there that would not hold it better to die of a wound than to be incapable of being stricken. When that sorrow, the commonest of all that comes through others, the sorrow that comes from the death of those we love, strikes people for the first time, they are apt to think, and even to say, that it were better love no one than love those who die : better have a heart hard as the nether millstone than one susceptible of such wounds as death deals to survivors. But, oh, how false ! How ungrateful to forget the former joys that

were possible only to a heart capable of missing them so bitterly. The friend is dead; but not dead, for it cannot die, is the memory of the days that were hallowed by affection, and that give earnest of a future, where the parted streams shall flow together again and for ever. Besides, these shocks have blessed use. They detach us. It were hard to die if all we loved were here to leave behind, but not hard when those are gone before who, if souls die not, nor change their essence, will meet us on the further side of the dim, dark sea that flows between the living and the dead. The ghosts beckon us with their shadowy arms, and sometimes the voices of the dead draw us like songs of sirens.

Who that had a friend that died could bear an earthly immortality, even though, unlike that of Tithonus, it were accompanied by everlasting youth? Nay, what a doom it were to live on earth for ever wearing the mask of everlasting youth, while underneath the soul grew old and wrinkled with the myriad lines of experience. What a doom it were to make friends with happy children, mortal sons of mortal men, who could, when the cup of earthly experience grew too full or too bitter, empty it into eternity, and who never suspected the dread secret that made the doomed one unfit for human friendship. To see these children grow up and grow old with one after another of the blessed signs of age, then to see them die, and to know that never again through all the long eternity might he look upon their faces any more! Just imagine such a being after an experience of two or three hundred years. Would he not fly from the face of men, and dread nothing so much as a new friendship? For



a century he might get on admirably. He might even have a certain consolation in seeing his friend through all the vicissitudes of life, might force back his tears when they parted for ever on the edge of that land shut against him alone of mortal men. The web is broken and swept away that he had been spinning for a human lifetime. Then emulating the perseverance, heroic in little, of the spider, he might begin again in a new generation. But never could he weave again as he wove of old. The past would throw its shadow on the present, and an intolerable light would glare on all human things from the inevitable future.

Legend has hinted the character I have been imagining in the mediæval story of the "Wandering Jew," and popular instinct has rightly seen a curse in the prolonged existence of Cartaphilus. But even his story has not a tithe of the horror of that which I strove to picture. He has the consolation of a purpose, the purpose of expiation, through which he sees an ending. He tends ever to a goal which he is sure to reach. However long his way, it is but a pilgrimage—he never makes a home.

From the fact that we can never be independent of the things we love, and from the additional fact that the capacity and the exercise of affection is needful to the perfection of human character, we may infer that we were never meant to be absolutely independent, and that such absolute independence, even if it were attainable, would be the greatest of all misfortunes. There are some most certain moral truths that sound like paradoxes. The more a man loves the less is he independent; but the more a man loves, and the more worthily, the more does he approach the possession of

that perfect freedom which is as far above mere independence as the poor harvest of any joy that may accrue from selfishness is below the ecstatic fulness of the Beatific Vision.

The independence that is worth having is independence of the things that are not worth caring for. The independence which it would be madness to seek, and death to attain, is independence of the worthy objects of human affection. Weigh all things, love those that are worthy, love the worthiest most, and you will find yourself in the possession of exactly that amount of independence that it is well for you to have.

All this, however, has reference to that spiritual independence that has its throne in the inner sanctuary, and that affects chiefly a man's own personality. There is a coarser kind of independence that exists on a lower level of human life, of which it may be proper to speak a little. It is the independence that secures to a man the management of his own life without undue interference from outside. Such independence is dear, and reasonably dear to every man who can conceive its value. But observe I say "undue" interference. And I say so because a man ought to manage his life rationally, and if the right reason be not in him, or if it be in temporary abeyance, it would be simply a calamity to him that it should not be supplied by the interference of others, whether that interference take the shape of law with its sanction, or the shape of influence more or less accentuated by those who have a claim to use it.

A man may carry on his life, though not without some hard knocks from circumstances, with very little regard to logic. He can entertain ideas which are

kept from flatly contradicting each other only by never being brought face to face. He can wish the end, and turn from the means with unconcealed disgust. He may not only entertain a family of incompatible desires, but he may seek to gratify them all till fate brings his head into smart collision with one of those walls which it builds for the heads of the unwise. Often a man will spend his whole life in trying to eat his loaf, and yet have it, in striving to solve that problem of the moral squaring of the circle, in such wise that all extremes will meet in his single self. These things being so, it is not wonderful that men will sometimes seek independence by roads that end inevitably in bondage. It will be practical, then, to glance at a few of the conditions under which alone a man need hope to secure the independence of which I speak, that independence that will place in his own hand as much of his life as his hand can hold.

First, then, such independence rigorously exacts the absence of undue pretension. A man must seek to be independent only within the limits of that sphere in which he really is and really acts. He must be content to be himself, nor seek to pawn himself off for something better or more useful. The slavery of most lives comes from men asking from the world more than they are really worth. They have not the essential *quid pro quo*, and quite naturally they eke out their insufficient worth by the adventitious aids of servility. But there are none of the prizes of life that are not too dearly bought if they cost a man's real self. If a man stand, say, five feet ten upon the solid earth, he has a grip of it, so to speak; and hardly any one will try to trip him up. But if he perch himself upon some

stool or other, and proclaim to passers-by that he is seven feet high, there arises a temptation, irresistible by average humanity, to kick the stool from under him and leave him sprawling in the gutter.

Above all, if you want to be independent, take care both to know and to do your proper work. The doing of a man's duty is the only real charter of his independence. It bestows upon a man's life a dignity on which few will infringe, and a freedom which, whoever seeks to violate, will put himself inevitably in the wrong. I know a man who is always rather taken by a touch of impudence in a new servant. He concludes that if he were not a good servant he could scarcely afford to be impudent so soon. This may be carrying the matter too far; but there is a certain vein of likelihood in it, and, at all events, the man who does his work well may look the world in the face. Half the cringing and fawning that goes on in the world is an instinctive sacrifice to abstract justice by men who have an uneasy consciousness of duties neglected and claims unsatisfied.

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## XXII.—ABOUT IMPARTIALITY.

**IT** is a fine study, and an inexhaustible, the impartiality of nature. She has no favourites, will not pet anyone. She cares equally for the cedar of Libanus, and for the hyssop that cometh out of the wall, and will expend as fine a force and skill in bringing a weed to its due perfection as she will in the finishing of some rare exotic.

She spares no pains upon her pictures in the sky, and gladdens the eyes of all uplookers with a wealth of unimaginable colouring ; but she has equal care for the pathetic hues of the withering leaf of which no eye shall see the beauty, not even his who shall soon tread it into the mire. Nature's laws fulfil themselves in a molehill as fully as in a mountain ; nay, in every atom is an epitome of the wonder of the universe.

But nature is not impartial in reference to the ends she has in view. These she will attain at the cost of any sacrifice. Expensive are the holocausts she demands for the sacred altars of her purpose. Race will devour race, and the higher organisation absorb the lower, till, stratum by stratum—each stratum made out of the wreck and ruin of one that went before—she builds up to the level upon which higher forms of life can find subsistence. Then comes her masterpiece—man. All these geologies and these chemistries have been in operation so many ages, simply to give a habitat to man. A cynical geologist might be tempted to quote, "*Parturiunt montes, et nascitur ridiculus—homo.*" He is welcome to his joke ; but nature knows what she is about, and man is worth exactly all the pains and cost it took to get him ready to appear.

But when he appears even he is not a favourite. Certainly he is not a favourite in the sense that nature will turn aside from her determined paths to spare an individual here and there, nay, nor to spare a million individuals if they happen to stand in the line of an explosion of any of her terrific forces. Build a city upon the site beneath which, before human eras even began, nature had been laying in materials for an earthquake, and though the achievements of a race



and the civilisation of an epoch were symbolised in its structure, when the hour strikes it will reel and shake asunder and break like a wave of the unresting sea.

To be sure, I do not forget the higher Providence, of which nature is only an instrument. But in the working of details we are left very much in the dark, our only wise conclusion that whatever happens is according to the highest wisdom, our only perfect prayer, "Thy will be done." You and I expect that Providence will protect us from this danger or that; and Providence assuredly will: but it will be, or may be, in ways better than we know or can pray for. A good man stands in the path of the red lightning; he is stricken down, dies before he has had time to feel the shock that killed him, and shallow bystanders can hardly conceal their wonder that so good a man should die so, should not have been specially protected. Never think they that this very thing that happened may be an infinitely higher form of the special protection they desiderate.

The impartiality of nature is best seen in this, that her working maxim is, "*ne quid nimis*." Even of the best of things she will not have too much; and when too much threatens, her hand promptly throws into the other scale. Anarchy will lead to despotism, and despotism back again to anarchy. There will be the recoil in the second generation from the tension of the first. Overstrict parents drive their sons to laxness; and I have sometimes seen that the folly and improvidence of a father have been to his son most efficient teachers of wisdom and thrift. Excellence after a certain point is sure to go a-limping, lest it should outrun other excellences. Beauty will often have to carry a little unwisdom, the artist will be improvident, genius

will forget the rent day, and the hard, practical man of the world will just lose the charm which the uses he affects have for men more imaginative. "*Nequid nimis, nequid nimis*" is the refrain that nature tacks to every song she sings. She will secure her ends by keeping her impartiality.

Both things and persons are partial, but nature pits one partiality against another, and justice is done. Manage how we may, there is in all human things a crisis, after which they begin to tend to undesirable opposites. It is almost inevitably up hill and down hill, a perpetual see-saw. You aim at ripeness, and you scarcely have it when the unpleasant stage sets in that is on the other side of ripeness. The flower at its fairest runs to seed, becomes ragged and unsightly. There is a halfness about things, a haunting sense of limitation.

Pleasant is it to eat when you are hungry ; but overpass the due limit, and nature hands you over to the keeping of that unpopular officer of her high court of justice, who is known and not loved, under the name of Dyspepsia. Knowledge is better than food, but you may take it injudiciously, may overfeed yourself with it, may fall in with some unwholesome qualities of it. Then you will lose the power of discriminating ; will have no notion of mental perspective ; will come to believe in a sort of red republic of facts in which one fact is exactly as good as another ; will spend after the manner of dry-as-dusts any amount of time in settling, or rather in showing the impossibility of settling, the question as to whether some one in some remote age who never did anything in particular for which men care a jot died in his sixtieth year or in his sixty-first ; and will think all the time that you are writing history.

In fact, you will have become incapable of knowledge in any worthy sense of the word.

Indeed, it is in the matter of knowledge that a man is most haunted with a sense of inevitable limitation. The ardent student begins by taking all knowledge for his province: then he finds things changing one into another. He cannot drive any subject along anything like a clear highway; it slips in spite of him into by-paths, leads him wild-goose chases through difficult tracts, and, perhaps, ends by landing him in a quagmire. At best, he finds that in order to know A, he must look up B, and that B is not to be approached without credentials from C, and so on to the end of the alphabet—an end which not Mathusalem himself has lived long enough to arrive at. Rendered wiser by experience, the baffled student calls in the scouts of his army rallies his dispersed forces, feels that life, nay, not life alone, but eternity, is too short to exhaust the inexhaustible. He gives up with a sigh his dream of over-running a world, henceforth it shall be his humble aim to subjugate a province. He becomes more or less a specialist. Nor does this help him much; for, on a reduced scale, but in exact proportion, the difficulties of the large beset him in the little, and he learns that not alone the ocean of knowledge is unfathomable, but that man has no plummet that will quite strike the bottom of any little well where truth keeps house.

Besides, by becoming a specialist, a man maims himself. The world may be the gainer, but to a certain extent, "the individual withers." Specialism and pedantry are perilously near each other. There is little help in routine when it is confronted with the unexpected; and there are very many occasions in

which an ounce of mother-wit and resource is worth a ton of theory. Men who come to be very learned seem to lose the power of originating anything. They have their own functions, and very important ones they are. They become preservers, and distributors, and, above all, historians of past effort. But it would be absurd to send them on voyages of discovery or to explore new worlds. For that you want men of adventure, men of restless spirit, who could stay at home only at the risk of doing something for which society would hang them; men of sinew and muscle who have not left their eyesight between the pages of any book, nor drained off the force of their right hands through the channel of a goose-quill; men who have in themselves an answer for every question the hour asks, and in themselves a resource in every unexpected complication of circumstances. Send these out and they will make a new world of which books have never given a hint. Their very ignorance has helped them. They were fettered by no precedent, for they knew none. This thing was to be done or that. They knew not, nor did they care to know, whether a like thing was ever done before. But this they knew, that if it were to be done here and now, it must be done thus and not otherwise, and they did it.

But then comes the other side. These men of action cannot make the moulds in which the hot metal of action will cool into knowledge. Respecting never so highly their practicality, one cannot help seeing that they lack the finer thought that gives its best value to experience. They are somewhat like savages who have a profusion of gold and diamonds but are ignorant of their civilised uses.

There is something very graceful in the enthusiasm of a youthful student. He is absorbed in his pursuits ; he is able to put himself into the mood that makes study a pure pleasure. I mean the mood that has no doubt but the present subject is the most important of all subjects. There is a sort of fierce disdain of other branches as if they involved a loss of precious time. Afterwards, as the world widens, such a mood becomes less possible. The sources of intellectual enthusiasm begin to fail. Men are so much in earnest about things radically different that it becomes difficult to class subjects in the degree of their importance. Or, the student is somewhat posed by meeting some comparatively unlettered man whose common sense anticipates the conclusions of philosophy, and whose native resources place him on a fair level with the latest discoveries of science.

However, these considerations have led me away somewhat from my immediate purpose. Having spoken of impartiality in connection with nature, let us consider it a little in connection with men.

Impartiality is one of those cold-blooded virtues, the exercise of which seems to give unlimited satisfaction to hard-hearted people. The mere profession of impartiality gives a man a sort of claim to the judicial ermine ; and when he improvises a tribunal, and brings some social delinquent to the bar, scarcely anyone is bold enough to question his right to the seat of judgment. But virtues, in proportion as they are admirable and admired, present temptations to the counterfeiter and the cheat ; and the man who, in any department of human things, lays claim to the rare merit of impartiality, need not feel himself insulted if his claim be



subjected to the most rigid scrutiny. As there is a spurious prudence which, when analysed, is merely a scientific culture of selfishness ; as there is a spurious fortitude that bears with great equanimity the calamities of others ; as there is a spurious temperance, that condemns all intemperance except intemperance of condemnation ; as there is a spurious justice that concerns itself only with the debts due to it, without any regard to the debts it owes : so of impartiality, which, indeed, is a branch of justice, there is a spurious sort that often imposes itself upon uncritical people as the genuine article.

Every man, in his dealings with men, ought to aim at impartiality. But the aim is so difficult of attainment that the impartial man, like the wise man of the Stoics, has hitherto remained, and shall probably remain, among the unrealised ideals of human aspiration. Perfect impartiality would not, I imagine, tend to increase the personal popularity of the man who happened to possess it. Even the imperfect attainment of it, that is, happily, possible, has usually resulted in pleasing nobody. There is, to begin with, a certain exasperation that is excited by the exhibition of it. Most men do not even profess to be impartial. They are unmistakable partisans, keenly eager, and undisguisedly biased on the side of their own personal interests. Indeed, they come to think that such a bias is among the normal accompaniments of right reason ; and when some one makes pretension of not having it, society is apt to rise against him as one of those mischievous beings who initiate any possible amount of wrong-doing by setting up to be better than his neighbours. What can you expect of a man who professes

that the merits of a case have for him a fascination that overrides the fascination of his personal interest in its being decided one way rather than another. The world refuses to believe in such profession, and not unnaturally, for the state is abnormal, and abnormal phenomena need better proof than mere words. If, indeed, a man *act* impartially the world will give him credit for it, even though in doing so it compassionately classes him with that not very numerous band, that *pusillus grex*—"too good for the world they live in."

There is, however, something to be said for the popular instinct that rather dislikes an obtrusive impartiality. High virtues are not to be had without a struggle, and that struggle is often like an incursion into an enemy's country, to make which a man is often tempted to leave his own fireside unguarded. When he returns victorious he may find seated by his own hearth certain undesirable guests who will insist on marching with him in his triumph to the capitol. These guests may be called little unamiabilities that sometimes accompany great merit. Or, to illustrate in another way: when weeds have got into the field of life, the pulling up of them is not effected without a displacement of good soil, and a certain consequent disfigurement, more or less temporary. If you have ever known a thorough convert, a man who, having been bad, was striving with all his might to be good, you will know how unintentionally trying, and how unconsciously disagreeable he may occasionally make himself even to sympathetic bystanders.

This is the case even when the virtues are real. How much more is it the case when they are only more or less successful imitations? When a man affects a

special virtue he is in danger of making a hobby of it, and hobbies are generally ridden to death, or, at any rate, are ridden, without any regard to the law of trespass, over the fields of our neighbours. The virtue begins to be a taste, and our tastes very easily come to be tyrants both to ourselves and to others. It is so easy to overstep the limit that fences us from an extreme, that men often overpass it long before they think they have reached it. How many unvirtuous things have been done in the name of virtue. How often has even genuine virtue been carried out of the medium that was its natural home into an extreme that stamped on it the lineaments of vice to the eyes of every one except of him who still ruthlessly inflicted it upon the world. These dangers that I have hinted at are at the bottom of the suspicion, not to say the dislike, that ordinary people have for some unquestionably great virtues.

The cardinal virtues themselves would scarcely secure full appreciation from a mob. Prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, exact in their exercise such exemption from the passions by which average men are swayed, that average men come to believe that those who practise them must be altogether passionless; and the mob feels, and in this feels justly, that a thoroughly passionless man is a moral monster, a sort of solvent acid, poured upon all the bonds that keep men together, hand in hand and heart to heart. Poor mob, having experience only on the petty objects that are whirled like straws, and as valueless as straws, in the gusts of its own petty passions, has no notion of the passion for heroic virtue that carries poor human nature to the floodtide of purpose and achievement.

But, in truth, most of the impartiality that one sees is of the spurious sort, and it will be to good purpose to examine some specimens both of impartiality and its opposite, that will let in some light on the great root motives.

There is, then, the intellectual impartiality that I have sometimes met amongst men intellectually clever but not intellectually great. They are so impartial that they never decide. Keen enough, and glistening, they are blades that lend themselves to other hands for good or evil, and need other hands to find a use for them. They seem to see every side of every question, every weak place in every argument. The drawback is, that there is no argument, *pro* or *con*, without its weak place. A hundred roads to the desired goal stretch out before them; but every road is lined with enemies, which duller-sighted men would not have seen, and more courageous men would have despised. They sink into mere expositors, whose sole function it becomes to state a question they cannot or dare not answer, for those who are able, and not afraid to answer it. These latter suck them like an orange, and throw them aside like the rind.

I dare say the life of such an intellectual fribble is not without its pleasures. The office of critical expositor of other people's plans has delights of its own. It is amusing, if nothing higher, to have, as by universal consent, a free pass from one camp to another, half busybody, half peacemaker. Only the disadvantage is, that when real fighting begins they are hustled aside as useless or obstructive; and no matter which side wins the battle there is for them no laurel wreath, for there is no side of which they did not partly prophesy

the failure. Another drawback is, that with a wealth of endowment, that to a superficial observer would have given certain earnest of great achievement, they never achieve anything. Intellectually impotent, they leave behind them no intellectual children for the use or solace of mankind. It is no wonder that such impartiality is not popular. Men have a passion for doing something or seeing something done. Many a folly and many a fault will they forgive to a real worker who has helped on a cause ever so little ; but the man who weighs and balances, throws up objection and answer as a juggler throws up balls, such a one the world knows will never make men his debtors for a stroke of real work.

Just as little wonder that this manner of impartiality should soon cease to be respectable. In most cases it springs rather from a defect of nature than from fulness of intellectual light. It is usually the attribute of men who, having a great deal of what the world calls "head," have, withal, very little "heart," and whose courage is of the sort that "oozes out at the fingers' ends." They cannot give a decision on any side because they do not care enough about any side to think it worth while to risk a decision in its favour.

It is very much the same in the domain of morals. But impartiality in moral judgments often deserves rather the name of indifference. This indifference is of two sorts, the indifference of easy-going, good-natured people, who tolerate everyone and everything, so long as toleration does not involve any degree of self-sacrifice ; and the indifference of the man of acrid nature and bilious temperament, who, in every difference between men, has a keen eye for the faults



that are proverbially declared to be discoverable on both sides of every dispute. The former praise everyone all round, the latter censure all sides indifferently.

But, besides, there are two classes of good people the negatively good, and the positively good. There are those who are so scrupulously afraid of doing wrong that they seldom venture to do anything; and those who are never satisfied unless when engaged in action. The former, disliking intensely to commit themselves, will present at first sight a greater appearance of impartiality than the others; but second sight may not tend to confirm such a conclusion. The others have to live in a keener air and to deal with rougher elements. The roughness gets into their tongues and into their temper, and their moral judgments rarely fail in decisiveness, or lack the definite outline which incisive speech can impart to the raw material of human judgments.

The hardest work in the world is done by men whose brains are constructed on so simple a plan that they can house only one idea at a time. They are unembarrassed by those large intellectual possessions that in crises of action often turn into encumbrances. Whatever may be said of a long campaign, it is certain that in a riot those are apt to be boldest who have little or nothing to lose. Property of all sorts is everywhere prone to timidity. These men of whom I speak have not the slightest hesitation in running their heads against stone walls, logical or other; and the marvel is their heads are so thick that they never seem to feel the shock of the collision. Inconsistency, that is the "*bête noir*" of sensitive people, gives them no trouble, for however largely it may appear in their conduct or

in their opinions they are quite unaware of its existence.

They live in the present, and have very little care, and very little memory for what they said or thought yesterday or the day before. And as the world's memory is almost equally short, their vehemence about anything this week is not discountenanced by their equal vehemence the week before about something not only different but incompatible. Assuredly, these men are not impartial, except, perhaps, in the long run. They are always vehement partisans of their own present views. But I say "in the long run," because in the summing up of their career it may be found that practically they have earned a claim to impartiality from the fact that there was scarcely any party to which, at any rate constructively, they did not, from time to time, give their support.

Another class, far removed from impartiality, is made up of the hot-headed, who make a personal matter of their opinions. Their opinions are themselves, and these selves they long to impose upon a submissive world, of course for the world's own good. But the word is not submissive, and their counsels rejected they lose patience, and pull down the barriers of bitter speech. They are almost invariably well-meaning, but it is by well-meaning men that a great deal of hardship has been inflicted upon their neighbours. Let a man mean well for himself by all means. I for one shall never quarrel with him. But when he begins to mean well for *me*, and to fit, and, if it will not fit, as usually it will not, to force his meaning on my life, then I should wish to get as quickly as possible out of the sphere of his good intentions. Such a man has constant hope of making

earth a paradise, and a sort of sub-hope which he would scarcely acknowledge, that in the middle of that paradise will be erected a huge trophy bearing the name and keeping the fame of him—the reformer. But he finds that after all his efforts things go on very much the same. Earth refuses to become a paradise; men remain men—not angels yet—and our friend, having lost his pains, loses his temper. His whole mental history has been told in the jingle—"little pot, soon hot."

I think it is a bad thing when impartiality of any kind hardens into a state. True impartiality is shown in single instances and individual judgments; but when the instance has been reviewed, and the judgment formed, a man must cease to be impartial. How can he be impartial with regard to the standard of his judgment without forfeiting his self-respect and the respect of others. There is a right and a wrong in everything, and an ascertainable right and wrong in most things, and once having ascertained, impartiality—the refusing to take a side—is either indifference or cowardice.

I find that impartiality is apt to harden into a state amongst a class of men for whom the world has great respect, and for whom most people have nothing but good words—I mean "the moderate men."

A moderate man is constitutionally timid, and consequently looks on conservatism as an essential feature in the right order of things. He will not willingly leave the old paths; but if a truculent passer-by threatens to push him into the gutter, he will not fight even for the old path he loves so well. I suppose this timidity is one of those admirable devices by which nature hinders even the most inveterate conservatism from being utterly obstructive of progress. The moderate man

has no strong opinions, except, indeed, and the exception is an important one, a strong opinion that all other strong opinions are dangerous to the peace of the world; something like moral dynamite, that is highly undesirable, especially in one's immediate neighbourhood. He is usually kind-hearted, for kindness is easier than severity, and benevolence is oil on troubled waters. But in difficult circumstances he fails to exhibit the courage of his friendships. He will not fight for anyone. Somehow I think these moderate men are less frequently happy than the world imagines. It is the old story of the old man and his ass. A moderate man finds after a long lifetime of striving to please everybody that nobody is in the least pleased, and that the utmost he has to expect even from his best wishers is the "charity of silence." Besides, his peace is broken in another way, without mention of which this slight sketch of him would be incomplete. I never met a moderate man who did not seem perpetually arraigning himself, as it were, before an imaginary tribunal, much more concerned about the justification of his acts than about their quality or their consequences. His epitaph may be written by a variation of that witty one of Rochester on Charles the Second: "Here lies our moderate man, who never did anything foolish, or anything great."

## XXIII.—ABOUT YOUTH.

I HAVE lately been reading over Cicero's treatise "on o'd age." It was written when he was about sixty-three, just probably when he began to be dimly conscious—*dimly* as is the fashion with ageing men—that he himself might possibly have some personal concern in the subject which he undertook to treat. In his treatise there are, as a matter of course, many wise things, but in nothing is it wiser than in the illustration it affords of an art that has a great deal to do with the happy conduct of life; I mean the art of making the best of what one happens to have, and of being just a little blind to the advantages of things which we can have no longer. It is an art not so closely cultivated as it deserves. If there be a class of people whose "geese are all swans," the class is far more numerous whose very swans are geese. There is no lot so bitter as not to have its alleviations, nor any stage of existence that has not pleasures and advantages peculiarly its own; and I think it was eminently wise for a gentleman of sixty-three to turn his attention to the discovery and the setting forth of the delights of old age.

It is a treatise, too, which, for the very reasons that made it wise to write it, might very properly form part of the reading of men who find themselves—as men do almost to their dismay—in the neighbourhood of sixty. To be sure, Cicero, or Cato for him, overdoes the matter



somewhat. To judge by the fine things that are said about it, a man ought not only be resigned to the coming of old age, but ought to welcome it with acclamation as the only really dignified stage of human existence. But men will still be found who will ardently wish to live to be old, and who, attaining their wish, will feel somewhat sadly, that old age is not *in esse* as *in velle*, the thing most of all to be desired. It is too near death for that, and the modern mind has rather a dread of death. Cicero settled that matter very easily. With him either an immortal soul survived, or all ended with death. If the latter, one could not be miserable; if the former, one could not but be happy. It never seems to have occurred to him that there was a very unpleasant *tertium quid* to be disposed of that has always haunted the human mind and been a peculiar source of the bitterness of death, namely, that it is quite possible that an immortal soul may survive the dissolution of its partnership with the body, and yet find itself not quite so comfortable as might be desired in that land beyond the grave.

However, I repeat, it was a wise thing to pass in review the best things that could be said of old age, especially when it was approaching, just as it would be wise to dilate rather on the virtues than the faults of a person with whom circumstances were about to compel us to live. The writer takes care to remark that not every old age is the object of his praise, but only the old age that is, as it were, built upon the lines of youth; that is, the old age that is the natural growth and outcome of a life well spent. It occurs to me now to examine some of those "*fundamenta adolescentiæ*," and if my examination seem to take the form of a sort

of indictment against youth in general, let it be remembered that such an extreme view is not likely to be harmful in the face of the time-honoured conventionality that takes it for granted that youth is the happiest season of human life.

I do not think so myself; I even think that there is somewhat of an incompatibility between happiness and youth. For a man of whom it is demanded "which season of human life he found the happiest?" the wisest answer would be, "that in which I am at present." But abstracting from a man's own self, the answer in nine cases out of ten would resolve itself into a question of taste.

*"De gustibus non est disputandum"*—that there is no disputing about tastes—is itself an indisputable maxim. But when people go farther, as they sometimes do, and declare that "there is no accounting for tastes," they lay down a very questionable proposition. "No accounting for tastes"—never was an assertion less philosophical or less true. For, is there any taste without an antecedent history quite sufficient to account for it with scientific accuracy? To be sure I cannot account for your taste—but that is only saying that I do not know as much about you as you know or ought to know about yourself. But in truth, men, even those who are brought closest and oftenest together, do not amass much knowledge about each other. Our judgments of men are mostly made up of impressions the origin of which we have quite forgotten. We make vague pictures of each other, and plume ourselves on being judges of character. But our best-known neighbours may any day surprise us by exhibiting mental or moral symptoms for which our cleverest diagnosis had

nowise prepared us. We often judge of a man by his theories and his opinions, and forget to take any account of the little tastes that seem the merest fringes of character, but that are the chief part of most characters. A man's theories often hide even more than they reveal him; his opinions may be rather of the nature of artificial flowers than natural growths from his real character; but, in spite of himself, his tastes betray him. It is true that a man's present tastes may not have been congenital; they may have been, and often are, acquired by long compression and repression of tastes more native and original; but the acquisition once made is the history of the man who made it.

I say all this about tastes, because, if I could get from a perfectly dispassionate man—from a man able thoroughly to abstract from his own personal experience—from a man who could look on human life as impartially as if he were his own disembodied spirit—could I get from such a man a candid statement of his preference for any particular stage of human existence, I think I would have gone far in possessing myself of material sufficient to construct a water-tight theory as to what manner of man he was.

Not having ever been able to find such a man as I have been hinting at, I often amuse myself by asking persons what season of the year they most affect. The answers, with reasons appended, give surprising revelations of tastes, and consequently of selves. Each season has many things that may be pleaded in its behalf, and it is not wonderful that each should find enthusiastic admirers who cannot account for the depravity of taste that refuses to agree with them.

Let us by way of a diversion—which, however, like

most diversions, may be made to bear back upon the main subject—let us select four typical advocates to plead in behalf of the four seasons. Let them be the four well-known members of the great human race—Puer, Adolescens, Vir, Senex.

First begins thus, PUER : “ Some day, it may be in March or April, I feel as if the world were beginning over again. There is a new ground-tone in nature’s music, a breath in the air that was not in it yesterday ; a suggestion of something everywhere that stirs the blood. I say to myself, ‘ spring has come.’ To you, my dear Senex, who have forgotten more than I have yet learned, I could not hope to convey, by any words, the feeling of positive exultation that the sight of the first primrose awakens within me. I never tire of watching the daily deepening blue in the heavens, and the daily deepening richness of the grass upon the face of the earth. What is going to happen that nature is in such a flutter of expectation ? The hedge-rows seem in a very tumult of life. The rookery grows even hoarser, chanting the future of its race. Can anything be more amusing than the ceaseless fuss with which the birds set about establishing themselves in life. It is the time of hope, and has any fulfilment ever known on earth brought the same satisfaction as was born of the hope of it ? Infinite possibilities seem to arise within us ; as nature grows we grow. There is nothing we cannot do, we seem to be so helped by the forces that are at work around us. To be sure, it will not last. But that is true of most things, and must be borne with. When all is over, out of all this magnificent expenditure of force, I may have got only one or two fields well sown, and the sowing subject to a hundred vicissitudes.

But it *has been*—this gracious spring-time—come what may, nothing can rob me of the memory of it. Surely spring-time is the happiest time of all the year.”

ADOLESCENS : “ Well, I am no longer a boy, and I have ceased, I should hope, to feel as a boy. Spring was an uncertain time. It had its clouds and its tears. Besides, everything and everybody were too busy for my taste. I am glad the tumult is all over. Now it is full summer, and we may trust the sun to hold its heat, and the air to spare us any touch of caprice. The fields are sown, we have but to sit in the shade and plan the future. The flowers are rich and gay. The light waves of shadow chase each other across the freshly springing corn and the ripening meadows. The birds are hushed in the noontide, but their silence tells of happiness as loudly as their sweetest songs. Or, is it that they have deputed the lark to carry up their joy to heaven, and shower it down in a rain of music upon all the fields. Nothing is busy save the bee, and after a time its hum grows drowsy, and so attunes itself to the mid-day silence that one is saved, by a second thought, from calling it an impertinence. There is a solemn hush over everything. Surely something great is preparing—wait, wait.”

VIR : “ Something great was preparing, and, behold autumn has brought it. It was well worth even the aimless excitement of spring-time and the futile day-dreaming of summer. At last nature is ripe, and in full earnest. The fields are brown and golden, and the world will have no lack of food. Pleasant it is, no doubt, to watch the cloud-shadows, but pleasanter still to know that these clouds bring the fertilising rain. Flowers are good and gay, but men need fruit far more.



Hitherto there were only hopes that might be wrecked, here is the rich fulfilment. Or, if you will talk of beauty, what beauty can compare with the mature beauty of the autumn? Have you ever listened to the rustle of ripened corn, and made a song of it in your heart, and was ever song so rich in music? The leaves as they grow sere sing more pathetic songs. Later on, the corn falls in 'golden waves before the reaper, and is stored away, and men feel that they have earned the harvest-home. The crimson streaks grow more frequent in the sunset and the sunrise. The distant bank of foliage displays a wealth of colouring—russet, umber, crimson—which no painter would be bold enough to copy as it stands. Besides, one feels that this is just the right time to enjoy the beauty that nature spreads before us. Hitherto, one snatched a joy from the very jaws of work; now work is over, or nearly over, and joy grows more legitimate, and is enjoyed more leisurely."

SENEX: "You have given me the very word I want. In winter life goes on more leisurely. Gone, the fuss and the excitement of the spring-time; gone the dreamy indolence of summer, that relaxed the physical and mental fibre; gone, the touch of sadness that autumn beauty never fails to bring. Now we have time to sit down and enjoy the blessings we have prepared. Do you think that winter has no beauty of its own? Nay, but it is the very time of real beauty. You think of beauty, perhaps, as always sensuous. You must have drapery and colouring. Wait till you have risen from the beauty of colour to the nobler beauty of form. As the taste for colour grows less keen, the discernment of form is much keener. Do you see no beauty, weird, but still,

beauty, in the tree that flings its naked branches in the wind? I think it is beautiful with nobler beauty than ever was in tender leaflet, or in rich green leaf. See what the frost can do. How deft its fingers are in tracery upon the window-pane, and how grand a painter it is of the evening sky. It is well that the world should rest; well that the restless stream should be lulled into a sleep of ice to dream of richer music for next year; well that the forces of nature should have surcease of labour, and recruit themselves for other flowers and other fruit. But, best is it that men should rest, and think over the year that is about to die, and gather into sheaves the experience that each season has brought. Or, how pleasant to draw the curtains close, shut out the bluster of the wind, sit awhile in the artificial twilight before the lamp is lighted, and see pictures in the fire, and then take down the favourite book, the thought of which has been pleasantly sounding like a scarce-heard ground-tone in your mind all day, and refresh your spirit with noble thoughts clothed in language that fully fits them."

If, however, passing from what is meant to be mere allegory, to what is real, I were to ask what season of human life is happiest, I suppose the answers would be just as various as the temperaments of those that answered. That is, would be as various if temperaments were allowed honestly to express themselves. But they rarely are. In most matters appertaining to taste we are under dominion of the conventional, and seldom dare rise in rebellion against the laws, which not we have made for ourselves, but which others have made for us. There are certain questions that invariably almost get the self-same stereotyped answers from all

answerers. Ask in the most mixed company : "Do you, or you, or you, like music?" How many do you think will have the courage to answer, "No," although it is certain that there are people who are so deficient in "ear," as not to be able to distinguish between the Dead March in Saul and the last new Polka. How much of this is due to Shakspeare it would not be easy to say. When he wrote : "The man who has no music in himself," &c., he made it very difficult for anyone to confess an honest dislike for music. When, however, I talk of what is due to Shakspeare, I mean rather what is due to Shakspeare wrongly interpreted. There is no one that ever wrote so much, whose personal opinions and personal tastes are less easy to discover. He was not the man to put wisdom in the mouth of a fool. He let men give their half views, and their no views, according to their calibre ; but it does not seem as if he meant any one of his characters to utter the whole Shakspeare, or the whole order of things.

It is taken for granted very often, that youth is *par excellence* the season of happiness. Most people who have been young, and who are so no longer, will readily hark in with the cry of the poet : "Give me back, give me back the wild freshness of morning." But, I think, there is in this view of the matter much that is merely conventional, and something that does not accurately represent the real facts as they occur in life. I have no doubt of the honesty and the sincerity of the persons who speak largely and loudly about the freshness of life's early morning ; but I think they labour under the delusion of confounding youth as it really was, and youth as it appears through the mystifying medium of a certain considerable number of years.

Youth is not the only thing that looks best at a distance. Youth may be regarded as an apprenticeship to the great art of living. But, in life as in other trades, the raw apprentices are sad bunglers, and often it is only when they are upon the very verge of being "out of their time," that they acquire sufficient skill in the doing of their work to make the doing of it a real pleasure. Youth is consequently a time of great unreadiness, and great resulting cringing to circumstances. It is worried by self-consciousness. Give a child some part to play before a large audience, and the child will play its part without a flutter of anxiety. The child has not yet learned to be nervous, because he is not yet sufficiently self-conscious. But in a few years nervousness comes and takes either the sheepish form of excessive bashfulness, or the bumptious form of excessive impudence. Either form of the disease makes life a hard business to the sufferer.

To a young man the world is new and strange, and he does not yet know his proper place in it. Indeed, he can, as yet, claim no place on the score of achievement, any claim he makes must be made on the score of promise. Now, what shall he promise? By what shall he bound his expectations, and within what limit shall he confine his purposes? He rarely errs on the side of defect. He usually promises too much, and expects too much, and there is a consequent discrepancy between his promises and the probabilities of their fulfilment that very early puts a strain upon his whole life. Nothing so perilous to peace of mind as to aim above the height which our powers can reach. But it is a mistake easily made, and commonly made in early youth.

We live, at all ages, very much in the opinion of our neighbours, and not so much, as most people imagine, in our own. Nor is it quite that we live in the opinion of our neighbours, but rather in the opinions about us which we imagine our neighbours to have. For, in nine cases out of ten, our neighbours will not have taken the trouble to form an opinion about us at all. When I say, "society, or the world, expects me to do this or that," the meaning is, that in my opinion society has been occupying itself very much about me and my affairs, has been at the pains to take the measure of my capabilities, has made an accurate estimate of my mental and moral qualities, has set up a standard which, if I do not attain, marked out a course which, if I do not follow, society will be, beyond measure, pained and disappointed. Now, very probably, the real fact is that society does not trouble its head about my affairs or about myself, has never been at the least pains to set up a standard for the adjustment of my powers and my ambition, and will be profoundly unconcerned about the course I pursue, provided that it does not interfere with its own pursuit of courses it deems desirable for itself.

To hear men talk—and how much more if we could only hear them think—one would imagine that they and their affairs had the most perennial interest for their next-door neighbour; that he not only criticises them, which, indeed, I admit, is sometimes the case, but that he feels intelligent sympathy in their hopes and their enjoyments. But a little reflection will dissipate the delusion. Your next-door neighbour is not, after all, so very unlike yourself; he is a man and a brother. Well, pray what amount of intelligent inte-



rest do *you* take in him or his affairs? Are you always, or nearly always, employed in speculating about his conduct, or his prospects, or his probable courses of action? Is not the fact this, that for twenty-three hours and three-quarters out of every twenty-four, you are utterly oblivious of his very existence; and if occasionally, and it will be only occasionally, you do spend the odd quarter hour in giving him and his the benefit of your consideration, is not the practical result the merest and the lightest gossip that hardly leaves a memory of itself in your own mind? You hear he has had some great success; well, you are not unduly elated on his account. You learn that some calamity has befallen him; in a human sort of way you are sorry, but it is with a sorrow that does not interfere appreciably with your power of enjoying yourself. Now, as you regard him it is not unlikely that he regards you; and hence it is not philosophical to take into account, as often as you do, his supposed decision about alternative courses of action.

If this be true of all ages it is specially true of youth; and of all the diseases to which a young man is liable, the one from which he is most likely to suffer, and to suffer most, is the disease of thinking that others have formed high expectations of his future achievements. A young man seems unduly ambitious: well, it is not in many cases that he is ambitious of the precise object of his pursuit; but he is ambitious to satisfy what he supposes to be the expectations that men have formed about him. It is not that he is desirous of expecting too much—only let any reliable authority tell him what he ought to expect, and he would be delivered from half his uneasiness: but he has an exaggerated estimate

of the opinion of his "world," whatever it may be. If he could only see the truth, that hardly any man expects very great things from other men, especially if these other men be of the circle of his everyday acquaintance. Take it for granted that the greater your achievement the more genuine will be the surprise of your friends and neighbours. What a blessed thing it is—and blessed the time that brings the knowledge—to know what one can do well, and what one cannot do at all.

But that is not a lesson learned in youth, and for want of it youth makes itself very unhappy. The young man engages himself beyond his powers, and is miserable at the inevitable failure. "The world is all before him where to choose." In one sense it is an advantage, this unshackled freedom of choice, but in another sense—and in a sense that oftenest fulfils itself—the vagueness of the outlook paralyses his freedom. He starts with the unquestioned postulate, "I am to do great things in the world. But what?" Time is passing, and hardly from any oracle can he get an answer to his question. Shall he be poet, or orator, or warrior, or statesman? He is quite uncertain, and the uncertainty makes him miserable. But in all the uncertainty one thing is very certain, that no great thing has yet been done, and forthwith he begins to feel that "the eyes of Europe," that is, of *his* Europe, are upon him; that society is beginning to be annoyed at his failure to realise its reasonable expectations; that his neighbours are wondering why in the world the power which they divine in him is not having its adequate result in visible performance. I am sure it is in many cases worth while to grow middle-aged, or even old, if only to be emancipated from the slavery

of youth's exaggerated estimates both of its own powers and its neighbour's expectations.

You remember the dog in *Æsop* that grasped at the shadow and lost the meat? That dog was, very evidently, in his early puppyhood. It was and is a folly eminently characteristic of youth, that grasping at shadows. By the time a man comes to admit to himself that he is no longer young, he begins to find out that the things which he desired most eagerly, the things for which, perhaps, he sacrificed other things of which only now does he begin to see the substantial worth, were as delusive and as unreal as the tremulous shadow in the gliding stream. And the worst of it is that all substantial things are liable to cast a shadow. It is curious, too, that there is about the shadow a glamour, a softness, a vagueness, a charm, that may make it, for the time being, seem more beautiful than the reality of which it is the shadow. Have you never seen it? There are few things more substantial or more valuable than the sacred affections of a young man's home. But soon they begin to cast a large and luminous shadow of themselves into the great world-lake outside, and then the foolish youth begins to dream of other affections truer and more lasting than these which he knew were true, and which have lasted, at all events, as long as his own life. And often for the shadow they let the substance go, and the father's hair may whiten and the mother's heart may break, but the son of their hope is away hunting after shadows up and down the world's weary ways.

Everything has its shadow. A young man has achieved some humble success that ought to satisfy him for the present. But at once it begins to cast its

shadow into the distance, and with desire of that shadow the fool worries himself into unfitness even for the little success that was the natural growth of his character and his surroundings.

To sum up briefly these disadvantages of youth or these drawbacks to the happiness of being young—youth has not made up its mind, nor found its place. It is standing idle in the market-place, or rather running restlessly through the streets, not having as yet found any master worthy to hire it. Youth expects too much from others, and thinks that others expect more from it than others usually do. The world is moderate enough in its demands on any of us. If we only avoid abnormal eccentricity, it will tolerate us. If we display even average intelligence, it is quite satisfied. In fact, youth is lovable for little more than its wealth of undeveloped possibilities, and it is itself the greatest obstacle to their proper development.

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